

FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

**Picture Perfect:
The Politics of Prenatal Testing**
Elizabeth Kristol

Women, Ordination, and Angels
Michael Novak

The Case for Discrimination
Graeme Hunter

Walker Percy and the Christian Scandal
Marion Montgomery

Opinions and Reviews: What Is To Be Learned from "The Church in Socialism" • Linda Chavez on Homosexuality
The Newtape File II • Gilbert Meilaender • Mark A. Noll
Edward T. Oakes • Charles L. Glenn • James Finn



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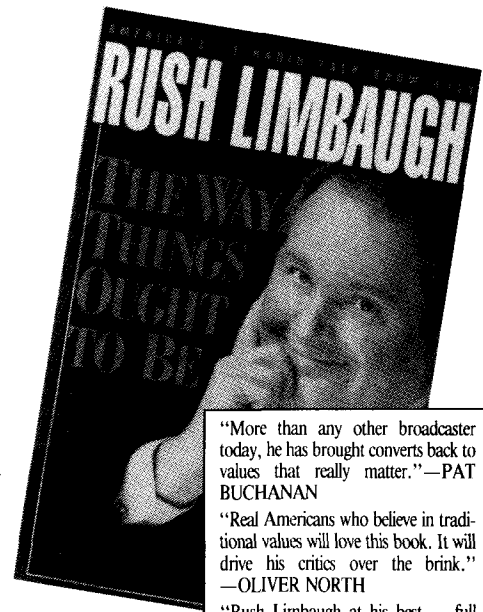
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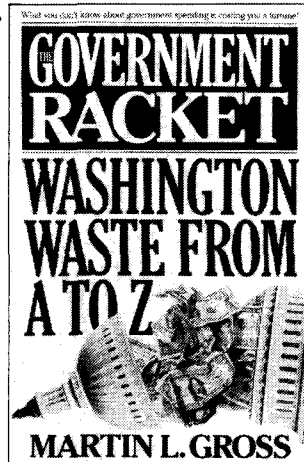


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A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

APRIL 1993 • NUMBER 32

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Editor-in-Chief: *Richard John Neuhaus*

Editor: *James Nuechterlein*

Managing Editor: *Matthew Berke*

Poetry Editor: *Jill P. Baumgaertner*

Publisher: *Institute on Religion and Public Life*

Publishing Service: *Publishing Management Associates*

FIRST THINGS: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life (ISSN #1047-5141) is published monthly (except for combined issues June/July and August/September) for \$24 per year by The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. Second class postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: send address changes to FIRST THINGS, P.O. Box 3000, Dept. FT, Denville, NJ 07834. Editorial Offices: The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. Editorial Phone: (212) 627-1985. Advertising Offices: 129 Phelps Avenue, Suite 312, Rockford, IL 61108. Advertising Phone: (815) 398-8569. Subscription Department: P.O. Box 3000, Dept. FT, Denville, NJ 07834. Unsolicited material cannot be returned unless accompanied by sufficient return postage. Newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 2020 Superior Street, Sandusky, OH 44870. Copyright © 1993 by The Institute on Religion and Public Life. All rights reserved.

FIRST THINGS

FIRST THINGS is published by Religion and Public Life, an inter-religious, nonpartisan research and education institute whose purpose is to advance a religiously informed public philosophy for the ordering of society. RPL also sponsors scholars conferences, consultations, research projects, public educational events, and a fellows program.

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Johnson on Trial?

The publication of Phillip E. Johnson's meandering and emotional diatribe against "Darwinism" in FIRST THINGS ("Creator or Blind Watchmaker?" January) was deeply disappointing. To begin with, the failure of the magazine to identify Mr. Johnson as a law professor, not a trained biologist, was a disservice to readers who might presume, incorrectly, that he has a scientific education. While one need not hold an academic degree in a subject to discuss it, a certain skepticism would seem to be in order when an individual who has devoted his life to one field decides, in middle age, to completely overthrow the findings of a radically different discipline.

Much more serious is the decision of the editors to implicitly endorse Johnson's cranky views. If a journal publishes a polemic by a Flat-Earther, conclusions about the beliefs of the editors may legitimately be drawn, their protests that they merely wish to stimulate debate notwithstanding.

Perhaps in forthcoming issues FIRST THINGS will explore other fascinating fringe topics: Has the wood of Noah's Ark actually been found in Turkey? Was the Shroud of Turin miraculously formed? If so, this former reader will miss out. I prefer my lunatic fundamentalism straight, from the Reverends Robertson and Swaggart.

Michael Lind
Executive Editor
The National Interest
Washington, D.C.

Phillip Johnson's article offers an interesting sample of current thought in the spectrum from Creationism to Darwinism. We might wonder where this doxology, the last sentence in a relevant work, Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, might fit in the spectrum: "There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the

fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved."

Although a first reading might suggest First Cause coloration, a careful reading reveals neither contradiction nor affirmation of the idea of continuing creation.

Paul B. Beatty, Jr.
Monroe, NC

Phillip Johnson's attack on evolution vastly underrates the power of modern science to understand the complicated mechanisms of evolution in favor of a threadbare "creationism" akin to Ptolemaic astronomy. It strains credulity to imagine that the sheer haphazardness and astonishing wastefulness of molecular, geological, biological, and cultural evolution could be linked to any cosmic purpose.

Instead of pooh-poohing science, theology should concentrate on helping human beings live better with themselves, their neighbors, their environment.

Elizabeth Randall
Aspen Hill, MD

Phillip E. Johnson replies:

People sometimes react like Michael Lind when their religion is challenged and they do not know how to defend it with reason. Paul Beatty's quote shows how wise Darwin was to sprinkle his works with vaguely theistic rhetoric to disarm potential critics. Darwin moved from deism to agnosticism during his adult life. He was always concerned, however, to present his theory in a rhetoric likely to gain the widest acceptance, and he did not want to shock his devout wife. His own philosophy was close to that articulated in the second sentence of Elizabeth Randall's letter.

Beat the Devil

As someone identified with the Devil—in the past by Christians because of my faith (Judaism), in the present both by Shiite Muslims because of my nationality (American)

and by the Nation of Islam because of my race (Caucasian)—I am triply disturbed by Walter Sundberg's "Primer on the Devil" (January).

The identification of real human beings with a principle of metaphysical evil has justified immeasurable cruelty; each one of us takes on the face of his adversary, goes the French proverb. I would respectfully caution Dr. Sundberg that theologies are judged by their fruits.

Rabbi Shamaï Kanter
Editor, *Conservative Judaism*
New York, NY

Walter Sundberg replies:

Rabbi Kanter points to one of the terrible forces of religious existence: the fanatical spirit that feels compelled to demonize the one who holds a different creed. In Western history the Jews have endured this dark side of religion more often and to more devastating effect than any other group. The Wars of Religion and the great European witch craze—both of which figured prominently in my narrative—also exemplify it. Across the centuries, educated and well-meaning people have claimed that if religious creeds were rationalized and pared down to their moral claims, the human family would fare much better. Baruch Spinoza was an early, eloquent spokesman for this position. The sad fact is, however, that rationalistic religion, such as deism, appeals only to the intellectual few and cannot inspire devoted followers. It thus bears no "fruit" and is soon replaced by godless creeds that practice demonization with scientific efficiency. Hitler and Stalin confessed neither God nor Devil and did things of which Spinoza never dreamed. The Devil will have his way whether or not we acknowledge him. Only the power of God can save us from ourselves—and the Devil.

Messianic Jews

Since it is in large part a response to my essay "When Jews are Christians" (FT, November 1991), I read Isaac C. Rottenberg's article, "Messianic Jews: A Troubling Presence" (December 1992) with particular interest.

One good response deserves another.

Rottenberg's article shows quite well the asymmetric character of the complex relationship between Judaism and Christianity. For although Judaism could persist without Christianity (however significant it is that Christians worship the God of Israel and acknowledge the Hebrew Bible), Christianity could not persist without Judaism. Accordingly, Jews who espouse Christianity, in whatever form, are more of an impediment to the Jewish-Christian relationship for Jews than they are for Christians. For Jews, they can be nothing less than apostates—who should, nevertheless, not be abandoned by the Jewish community.

Rottenberg really disputes only my secondary point: "Messianic" Jews also pose a problem for inner Christian self-understanding. He thinks that an accommodation to these Jewish Christians is similar to Christians accommodating the Gospel to the cultures of third world converts. . . . However, do these cultures claim to be the matrix of Christianity, a matrix that itself claims that any further supplementation is in truth a dilution of its authentic message? If not, then the problem of Jewish Christians still practicing *their own* version of Judaism is more of a Christian problem than he wants to admit.

Finally, I would suggest that Pastor Rottenberg is naive to think that "Messianic" Jews . . . can help re-Hellenize, and therefore de-Hellenize, contemporary Christianity. First, they are usually rather ignorant of Judaism and practice a somewhat romanticized version of it. Christians like Isaac Rottenberg can learn much more from Jews less ambivalent about Judaism. Second, many Christians, especially Eastern Orthodox Christians, are convinced that the Hellenization of Christianity has been to its benefit.

David Novak
Woodrow Wilson International
Center for Scholars
Washington, D.C.

Isaac Rottenberg challenges David Novak's rejection of "Messianic Jews" as participants in the Jewish-

Christian dialogue. Rottenberg's article mentions but then fails to follow up on the logic of the fact that terms such as "Messianic Jews" and "Jews for Jesus" refer not to individuals of Jewish background who have converted to Christianity (such as Cardinal Lustiger of Paris), but to groups or movements established by Christian churches in this country in the past century with the specific purpose of converting the Jewish community to Christianity. With this in mind, it becomes quite possible to agree with both Rottenberg and Novak. No, there is no place for representatives of groups whose main function is conversion of Jews within the organized Jewish-Christian dialogue. But, yes, there may be room for some individuals, such as Rottenberg himself, acting as concerned individual Christians, whatever the personal background that brought them to the dialogue.

In support of his view, Rottenberg adduces Tommaso Federici's paper from the 1977 International Catholic-Jewish Liaison meeting in Venice. He cites the appropriate principle prohibiting "any sort of witness and preaching which in any way constitutes a physical, moral, psychological, or cultural constraint on the Jews, both individuals and communities, such as might in any way destroy or even simply reduce their personal judgment, free will, and full autonomy of decision." But Rottenberg fails to cite Federici's own application of this agreed principle: "Consequently, attempts to set up organizations of any sort, particularly educational or welfare organizations, for the 'conversion' of Jews must be rejected."

To my mind, organized efforts such as the Messianic Jews and Jews for Jesus clearly fall into Federici's excluded category. This is especially true in Western societies, which are predominantly "Christian" demographically. Anyone with an understanding of the history of Christian attempts to convert Jews over the centuries can appreciate, I believe, that virtually *any* movement or group organized by Christians to convert Jews will cause such concern and, indeed,

fear in the Jewish community that it will inevitably reduce the necessary atmosphere for the exercise of free will by the Jewish minority. If nothing else, David Novak's article illustrates this fact of Jewish life vividly and effectively. Hence, if my reading of Federici is at all correct, nothing that might encourage such movements aimed at conversion of Jews should be allowed to operate in the name of the Catholic Church.

This, of course, does not answer all of the theological issues Rottenberg raises, on some of which I may agree and others disagree. But my point is that one need not answer all related or potential theological questions in this area to conclude that (a) the Messianic Jews and Jews for Jesus movements are indeed organizations set up by Christian churches for the specific purpose of establishing a mission to the Jews; and (b) such organizations are not properly suited to be represented at official dialogues between the Catholic Church and the Jewish community, whether or not all of them practice—as some of them indeed have practiced—quite dubious methods.

The involvement of individuals of Jewish background who have converted to Christianity but who are not members of such organized conversionary groups would have to be judged on a case-by-case basis. Factors to consider might include the level of involvement or of representation, individual temperament and judgment, the particular needs of a given situation locally, nationally, or internationally, etc. And I would always counsel close consultation with our partners in dialogue. Put in this perspective, I submit, the substantive theological issues that Rottenberg wishes to raise can be much more profitably faced by Jews and Christians together in dialogue, rather than attempted by either side alone.

Eugene J. Fisher
Secretariat for Ecumenical and
Interreligious Affairs
National Conference of
Catholic Bishops
Washington, D.C.

... As a Jew, I have problems with the term Messianic Jew, because I am not a Jew for Jesus/Hebrew Christian Jew, but a Jew who is still waiting for the First Coming of the Messiah.

There have always been Messianic Jews, as any brief review of Jewish history and literature will reveal. ... Even today, there are Messianic Jews and Messianic movements among Jews. The Hasidic Jews of Lubavitch want their ninety-one-year-old leader to declare himself to be the Messiah; and in Jerusalem, there is a group of Jews who wish to force an early return of the Messiah by attempting to place a foundation stone on the Temple Mount, on the site of the mosque now in place over the original Temple.

Are these not "Messianic Jews"?

I strongly agree with the view that Jews should be exempted from any Christian outreach. In fact, I would suggest that evangelicals of the Christian variety take a look at the efforts of "evangelicals" of the Jewish variety—Chabad Lubavitch—and concentrate more effort on backsliding Christians, for Lubavitch evangelizes only among Jews, wanting to "bring Jews to Judaism," as it were. ...

My experience with Christians who wish to engage in dialogue with me is one of awareness that they have their phasers locked on my soul, and I must not lower my shield. I believe that a salvific war exists between us, and these Hebrew Christian/Jews for Jesus soldiers are the "shock troops" used in a frontal assault.

Robert B. Godwin
Lacey, WA

Three cheers for FIRST THINGS! You had the courage to call attention to the truncated nature of Jewish-Christian dialogue in our day. Isaac Rottenberg's defense of the validity of Messianic Jews is a needed supplement to David Novak's "When Jews Are Christians."

Speaking as a missiologist, I cannot but heartily endorse Rottenberg's awareness of the significance of Messianic Jews, for none can speak so pointedly on missiological themes. They challenge the anthropological

monstrosity that cultural rootage and religious faith dare not be separated, as if when a Jewish person believes in Jesus, all Jewish identity is thereby forfeited.

Let's face it: Messianic Jews stand between their people and the Gentile churches, and are a problem to both. Actually all Jewish believers in Jesus as Messiah and Lord are thrust into a prophetic role, not by choice but from necessity. They experience the hostility of fellow Jews, because they stand against the persistent Jewish *no* to Jesus Christ. And they remind the churches of their persistent betrayal of Jesus Christ through their unwarranted anti-Semitism and unprovoked violence against the Jewish people. They are ostracized from Jewry because of their courage in exposing the tragedy of the rabbis who persist in defending the alleged rightness of Israel's once-for-all decision against her Messiah—a decision that has been hallowed by tradition and kept from revision over the centuries. And when Messianic Jews stand before the Gentile churches, they cannot but remind complacent Christians of their persistent failure to carry out the explicit mandate of God to evangelize the Jewish people.

Furthermore, although Jewish believers in Jesus Christ seek in every way to strengthen their identification with Jewry, as individuals before God they know themselves as accountable to Him, prior to any accountability to their own people. In this sense they speak against the Jewish heresy of salvation by covenant and race. At the same time as Christians they rebuke the nominality that Gentile churches all too readily tolerate, even promote. They remind both synagogue and church that there can be no collective decision for God, only a personal one. They have themselves made the costly personal decision of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, without which there is no personal relationship with God. They have become the objects of Jewish contempt for this decision, and they continue to suffer for their loyalty to him. Both

Jews and Gentiles need their prophetic witness.

Arthur F. Glasser
Dean Emeritus
Fuller Theological Seminary
Pasadena, CA

Isaac Rottenberg replies:

In the brief space available to me, I shall focus on the three correspondents who have raised questions about my article.

David Novak raises a valid point when, in response to my remarks about contextualization, he calls attention to the unique relationship between Judaism and Christianity as compared with people from other cultures and religions who have been reached with the Christian message. The distinction, in my judgment, does not eliminate the need for contextualization, but does raise a number of other very fundamental questions.

David Novak and I approach these issues from quite different perspectives. I do not see "Jewish Christianity" as a supplementation of the Church's authentic message. Quite the contrary. Gentile Christianity has developed as a questionable supplementation of the authentic New Testament vision of a Church in which Jews and Gentiles would live in unity as a sign of the *eschaton*: the coming Kingdom of God. During the second century, certain Fathers of the Church, the same people who laid the foundation for the pernicious anti-Judaism that eventually pervaded Christian theology, branded as heretics all Jewish Christians who sought to maintain a Jewish identity, even those who were quite orthodox in theology. Ever since, any form of "Jewish Christianity" has been resisted by a happily and arrogantly de-Judaized Church.

This leads me to Eugene Fisher's comments. The idea that the Messianic Jewish movement is the creation of churches for the purpose of serving as a missionary agency strikes me as a fiction, part of a mythology that has little basis in history. The documentary evidence suggests to me that (a) denominationally sponsored missions to Jews have been few and

usually weakly supported; (b) "Jewish Evangelism," both in Europe and the United States, has been conducted mostly by para-ecclesiastical societies holding an anti-supersessionist theology, often founded by Christians of Jewish descent and in the face of the churches' indifference, if not hostility; (c) Messianic Jewish organizational life finds its motivation at least as much in a felt need for mutual support in a largely hostile environment as it does in a missionary impulse; and (d) while some local evangelical congregations may give financial support to a group like Jews for Jesus, I am convinced that this is more the exception than the rule and that no funds from denominational budgets are involved.

Dr. Fisher's proposed procedure for admitting someone with a Jewish background to the dialogue sounds quite similar to the selection process followed by some elite country clubs. My interest is not in having a few more safely domesticated individuals with a Jewish background admitted to the "Club," as much as I appreciate my own contacts with "official" dialogue circles. Nor do I want to compromise carefully cultivated relationships of trust by creating a situation destructive to dialogue. Rather, I wonder whether some (perhaps less organizationally structured) ways could be found to explore issues that have plagued the church since its earliest days. I see this as an extension of a dialogue process that is becoming a bit repetitive.

David Novak detects a certain naivete in my approach. I admit that it all sounds a touch visionary. However, I remember during my childhood years occasional visits at our home by the ecumenical pioneer Willem Visser 't Hooft. So many people thought that he was a hopeless dreamer, but so much has happened since in ecumenical/interfaith endeavours that was considered impossible.

Finally, three quick answers to Mr. Godwin. (1) Yes, "Messianic Jews" is a confusing term, and precisely for the reasons you point out some Europeans seem to prefer "Messiah-confessing Jew." (2) Yes, the Chabad

Lubavitch do admirable educational work, more effective for the future of Judaism—I suspect—than the cries about "spiritual liquidation" by some Jewish leaders every time a Christian group issues a statement on mission. (3) No, not every "dialoguer" is out to snatch your soul; some would be saddened by the very idea of your "conversion."

The Christ of History

... Avery Dulles ("Historians and the Reality of Christ," December 1992) undoubtedly really believes that he can take in stride doubts about the "virginal conception of Jesus or the perpetual virginity of Mary." Perhaps these will not shake a profound, developed faith, but they will destroy a weak new one. Ours is an historical faith. We believe in Jesus Christ, who was born of the Virgin Mary and suffered under Pontius Pilate, a real person, in real time. Without its historical roots our faith would be like branches cut from a fruit tree in the early spring. They may burst into beautiful bloom, but they will not set their seeds, or bear fruit. From this blooming death there are no converts, no vocations, no saints, no martyrs. The tree of a living Christian faith must be rooted in the soil of history.

These scholarly doubts spring not from true scholarship, but from the ideological biases of the scholars. Tragically, these are not merely intellectual games. They have been taught to children and have destroyed the faith of a generation.

It is good history to believe the Gospels. And as the Second Vatican Council proclaimed, it is our faith: "Holy Mother Church has firmly and with absolute constancy held, and continues to hold, that the four Gospels . . . whose historical character the Church unhesitatingly asserts, faithfully hand on what Jesus Christ, while living among men, really did and taught. . . ."

Dale O'Leary
Barrington, RI

I appreciated Avery Dulles' thoughtful and helpful discussion, and yet I found myself less than fully satisfied

by his conclusions.

He seems to imply, for instance, that we should decide whether or not to accept a given Gospel narrative as historical according to a majority vote of those who are reputed to be "leading scholars" in the field. Evangelicals, with whom I would number myself, have developed what I believe to be a healthy skepticism toward such democratic methodologies. This, I am convinced, is justified in light of the subjectivism, antisupernaturalism, and rationalistic reductionism that sometimes accompany pronouncements in this field.

It is interesting that Father Dulles would hesitate to accept the positive perspective of someone like Joachim Jeremias regarding the trustworthiness of the various narratives on the grounds that such views "could be upset by further research." That seems to me a timid approach. One thinks of St. Paul's insistence on the real, bodily resurrection of Jesus. He leaves himself no fallback position when he says, "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God. . . ." (1 Cor. 15:14,15)

My contention is that if God has revealed himself in history in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and if we believe that the record of that revelation in Scripture is God-given (2 Timothy 3:16), we had better, at some point, be willing to contend for the basic historical trustworthiness of what has been given. I personally am convinced that no unbiased evidence has been presented that would make such a perspective untenable. . . .

(The Rev.) Russell C. Wentling
First United Methodist Church
Schuylkill Haven, PA

Avery Dulles replies:

Neither of my correspondents takes adequate cognizance of the different senses of the term "history" that I distinguished in my article. An assertion can be "historical" either because it corresponds to the facts or because it is verifiable by the methods used by historians.

In reply to Dale O'Leary, it must be said that Vatican II, in proclaim-

ing the "historicity" of the Gospels, presumably meant that their teachings give a true version of the events by which God accomplished our salvation. The Council did not teach that every doctrine of faith can be established by means of critical historical study of the Gospels. Historians differ about the degree of probability with which their method can vindicate doctrines such as the virginal conception of Jesus and the perpetual virginity of Mary. Their doubts can stem either from their personal biases or from the limitations of the method they employ.

Faith can be challenged by the doubts of historians, just as it can be confirmed by their positive findings. But faith does not finally depend on scientific history. To suppose that we can believe only what can be proved by historians would be a fatal error.

In reply to Russell Wentling I must protest that I do not hold, and did not suggest, that the acceptance of the teachings of the Gospels should depend on a majority vote of "leading scholars." The Christian believer, whether Protestant or Catholic, receives the Gospel as the inspired word of God, whereas the research historian treats it as an early source for reconstructing past events in accordance with the norms of a specified method. The arguments of historians, even though they may give a "high probability" to certain articles of faith, and may add many interesting details, are not the basis of the Christian's conviction. Professor Jeremias' arguments for the filial consciousness of Jesus are impressive, but, as I said, "few Christians would want their faith to depend on scholarly hypotheses such as these." Faith is a grace-given surrender to the word of God, not an adherence to the conjectures of historians.

On Maritain and the Jews

According to Michael Novak's article "Maritain and the Jews" (January), what the world needs is more faithful Jews and more faithful Christians, and presumably these are two distinct groups. There is no need for the Jews to embrace Christianity, especially since the testimony of history shows

how innocent and good have been the Jews and how cruel and despicable have been the Christians.

We need to thank Michael Novak for clearing up this misunderstanding of 2,000 years where the church, following St. Paul and the Gospels, thought that "there is neither Greek nor Jew . . . but that Christ is all in all." (Col. 3:11) If St. Paul and the other apostles had understood that the gospel was only meant for the Greeks, a lot of controversy and argument with the Jews would have been avoided. Of course it seems that our Lord was also confused because He thought that the gospel should be preached to the Jews first; whereas, we now know that it was not intended for them at all.

St. Paul's misunderstanding, it seems, was beyond repair because he thought that one was not a Jew on the outside (Rom. 2:28) and that the Christians were the heirs to the Promise, the true children of Abraham, the theological Jews: "Realize then that it is those who have faith [in Jesus] who are children of Abraham." (Gal. 3:7) . . .

However when the misunderstanding, as explained by Mr. Novak, is cleared up, one can see the consistency in the thought that we (Greeks) are responsible for the death of Jesus since He died for our sins; but the Jews are not responsible since Jesus did not die for them. They have no need for Jesus in any case since they have all those "ten prerogatives of Judaism" described in Mr. Novak's article.

Of course there is the historical detail that it was the Jews who engineered the crucifixion. This may be why St. Paul writes in 1 Thess. 2:14: "For you suffer the same things from your compatriots as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets. . . ." Likewise, in the morning of Pentecost St. Peter spoke to the Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 2:23) of "this Person you killed, by nailing Him to the cross through the hands of lawless men." To which the Jews asked, "Brothers, what should we do?" and St. Peter responded, "Repent and be baptized, each of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the for-

givenness of your sins.”

It was prudent for Saint Peter in Jerusalem, fifty days after the crucifixion, to speak thus, but it would be imprudent for us 2,000 years after the fact, in the United States, to bring up this topic. . . .

Jesus said that if we loved our father or our mother more than Him we were not worthy to be His disciples. One may deduce from this that we cannot love our friends more than Him either, even if they be Jews.

Luis Caso
Worthington, OH

A brief comment on Michael Novak's excellent piece, "Maritain and the Jews":

Assuming that Judeo-Christianity is not just a sequential matter in which one supplants the other, but a meaningful ongoing dialogue and friendship, essentially an alliance of faiths, I feel already the embryonic concrete presence in a number of spirits (notably those grouped around FIRST THINGS but in some earlier individuals as well) of the synthesis Maritain projects to a far-distant future.

That is the way things naturally grow. In those happy few harbingers we have an important indication of a movement already begun through ecumenical impulses within Christianity (and Judaism) along a singularly promising path toward the lodestar of eventual universalism. . . .

Robert Greer Cohn
Prof. Emeritus of French
Stanford University

Michael Novak quotes Maritain as saying that "the people of Israel is the sole people in the world to whom a land, the land of Canaan, was given by the true God." Maritain then says that "the return of a portion of the Jewish people and its regroupment in the Holy Land . . . is the reaccomplishment . . . of the divine promise."

To base the claim of the Israeli people to Palestine on God's promise to Abraham is an invalid argument for at least three reasons.

God said to Abraham: "To your descendants I give this land [Pales-

tine]." He did not say he was giving the land to only some of Abraham's descendants. The Arabs are as much the descendants of Abraham as are the Jews. They, too, are Semites.

Very few present-day Jews are descendants of Abraham. The many blond, blue-eyed Jews with German names do not owe their origin to the Middle East. As to the others, Arthur Koestler, himself a Jew, in his book *The Thirteenth Tribe* makes a strong argument that most European and American Jews are descendants of the Khazars, natives of a region in Turkey, who converted to Judaism in the Middle Ages. If the thesis is correct, then most modern Jews are not even Semites.

Among the ten prerogatives that Maritain, following St. Paul, attributes to Judaism, there is not an exclusive right to the land of Palestine. St. Paul says (Rom. 4) that "the promise made to Abraham and his descendants that they would inherit the world . . . holds true for all of Abraham's descendants, not only for those who have the law but for all who have his faith. He is the father of us all."

None of this, of course, justifies the abomination of anti-Semitism. But it does indicate that if Israel claims an exclusive right to the land of Palestine, that claim must be based on something other than God's promise to Abraham.

(The Rev.) Charles J. Robbins,
C.P.P.S.

Saint Joseph's College
Rensselaer, IN

In discussing anti-Semitism and the need to develop peaceful and brotherly relations with the Jews, Michael Novak commits the American fault of "giving no offense" that he refers to in his article.

. . . For a Jew reading his article, the obvious conclusion is that Christianity needs a vital and living Judaism in the concrete world of history in order to help it to understand its own inheritance, and therefore he would conclude that it is not necessary for him to go beyond Judaism. This view may be true with respect to the body of Judaism, which in its

blindness rejects Christ, but it is not true as to the individual Jew who is subject to Christ's commands more so than any other race.

Christ was a Jew and came to bring salvation first to the Jews, and His commands in the New Testament are directed to the Jews. To His disciples (Matt. 10:5) He commanded, do not go to the Gentiles, nor to the Samaritans, but go to the lost sheep of Israel. . . .

His continual admonitions were that without Him, the Kingdom of God was unattainable: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me." (John 14:6) . . .

So we can rightly condemn anti-Semitism, but taking a cue from the Jews, we must in a brotherly fashion be as forthright in presenting Christ as the Jews are in presenting their beliefs, for individual souls are at stake and it is for those souls that Christ died on the cross.

Vincent J. McMahon
Colorado Springs, CO

We are deeply indebted to Michael Novak's essay on anti-Semitism via the writings of Jacques Maritain for putting into such a wonderful perspective the mission for which Jews have been chosen by God, and the deeper dangers of anti-Semitism to the Christian soul.

Unfortunately, both Novak and Maritain gloss over the most prevalent cause of anti-Semitism. . . .

Maritain presumes a collective identity of Judaism and the mission of "earthly leavening . . . to irritate the world, to prod it, to move it . . . [to make it] dissatisfied and restless so long as it has not God," whereas in reality Jews are a varied people, many of whose irritation to non-Jews bears no relation to Maritain's description.

Moreover, it is safe to assume that the perception of Jews by anti-Semites has never reached the lofty philosophical view that "Judaism speaks to the world of a transcendent order, of the absolute, of mystery, of judgment."

The real explanation for most dislike of Jews is the collective identity and the demand placed upon non-

Jews to love or hate the collective. . . . Most of us dislike some Jews based upon their actions and love others. And we might express our feelings accordingly. . . .

Karl E. Brandt
Shallotte, NC

Michael Novak Replies:

To Mr. Caso I would reply that it is good Christian practice, before making judgment, to put oneself in the shoes of the other, and to look out on the world and oneself as that other does. The result of this practice is often humbling; for it is rare that others take as much care in excusing and overlooking our faults as we are prone to do on our own behalf. Through this practice one also becomes freshly aware of the ways in which one's life blocks, rather than lets through, the light of Christ's grace. At the heart of Christianity lies the sinner, grateful for God's mercy. This is the mystery of Christianity—but in the attitudes of mind, will, and heart that it asks of us not altogether distant. It is different from the mystery of Israel.

Thanks to Robert Greer Cohn for his emphasis on fecund vitalities in the present. Perhaps he would also agree that the word "synthesis" is ambiguous. Syncretism is not the same thing as symphony, and I much prefer the latter. While in friendship Christians and Jews may come to cherish what is deepest in the religion of the other, the Jew would not seem to be Jewish nor the Christian to be Christian if either lost clarity about their points of opposition. For this reason, I try not to use the expression "Judeo-Christian," which suggests a false amalgam, and much prefer to speak of "Jewish-Christian traditions." By contrast with radically hostile atheistic currents, in which the survival of both is threatened, there is special reason today to stress shared authorities, loves, and aspirations.

To Charles J. Robbins: Present-day Israel's claim to statehood is based on more proximate, normal, secular grounds than God's promise to Abraham. Nonetheless, as with much else about Israel, one is led (as Maritain was led) to note the mystery,

the depths, beyond the ordinary. Similarly, in speaking of "the people of Israel to whom a land . . . was given by the true God," Maritain was thinking in terms of covenant, promise, and faith, not blood and genes alone. So also St. Paul, when he said that God's promise to Abraham holds true "for all who have Abraham's faith."

Vincent McMahon describes well some of the further demands that Christianity would make upon Jews who wish to become, or to think about becoming, Christians. But I think he seriously underestimates two powerful impressions likely to block that path to Jewish Americans today: (1) the memory that many Jews were once coerced into becoming Christians; and (2) the experience of growing up today as a small group in an overwhelmingly Christian culture. These two experiences give rise to an acute awareness that the Christian faith does indeed entail a universal missionary impulse—and also a determination to resist it. Maritain's point is not that Christians have sometimes behaved badly; it is, rather, that Jews have many reasons to be quite aware of this aspect of Christian teaching while what they are less likely to know is that Christians have many reasons for cherishing Judaism. And cherishing it not only for what Jews and Christians have in common, but also to learn from the ways in which Jews interpret Judaism, often different from the ways in which Christians interpret it. Meanwhile, we can pray for God's grace to move both of our communities forward in the way He wills, and work to hasten mutual obedience to His will.

Karl E. Brandt misreads Maritain's sentence that "Judaism speaks to the world of a transcendent order, of the absolute, of mystery, of judgment" by thinking that the subject of that sentence is "Jews" rather than "Judaism." Still, he is surely right to stress that individuals (of any human group) are infinitely varied. Nonetheless, as Maritain pointed out, it is quite striking how often some Gentiles leap from one instance of the conduct of one Jew to a sen-

tence beginning, "Jews . . ." It is right to be on guard against such collectivizing impulses, but wrong to impute them to Maritain. As for the "real explanation" of anti-Semitism, I am afraid that it exceeds measure, understanding, and reason itself. It has the emptiness of a surd, the roaring force of malice. If humans are capable of an encounter with the Evil One, near here lies his lair.

Sinner or Sinned-Against?

I was much surprised and disappointed by Jacob Neusner's sour review of Solomon Schimmel, *The Seven Deadly Sins* (January). The review complains that Schimmel (a clinical psychologist) never does struggle with the thought of Kant or Hobbes, that he doesn't continue the debate on sin conducted by Maimonides and Milton, and that, in general, he trods clumsily in other people's gardens. The result, says Mr. Neusner, is "little more than a collection of banalities and commonplaces."

Not at all. The burden of Schimmel's book is that because sin is, among other disadvantages, futile and self-abusive, it counts as a species of folly (a concept familiar to Bible-believers and secularists alike). Schimmel's project is by apt quotations, examples, and clinical observations to illustrate and amplify this truth in a culture in which it is by no means commonplace. Maybe Neusner, unlike Samuel Johnson, does not think we need to be reminded more often than instructed, or perhaps he already knows all the quotations, or maybe he really does think that such Schimmelian observations as that the slothful are sometimes fervid, and that "it is rare to hear an adult ascribe his unhappiness to a frustrated desire to do good"—maybe the reviewer really does think all this is mere table wine, but a lot of us western Michigan Calvinists have been finding such, and other, things in the book pretty rich and revealing.

In any case, to mark Schimmel down for his failure to argue with Aquinas or to engage Kant is vain: Neusner might just as aptly have

complained that Schimmel appends no heart-healthy dinner menus for recovering gluttons, or other deadly sinners. Neither of these things was—nor should have been expected to be—on the agenda.

Schimmel's book, despite certain flaws (he surely doesn't get Calvinists quite right and Neusner is partly accurate on the deficiencies of the last chapter), is nonetheless so generally clear, thoughtful, sane, and altogether interesting that it would be a pity if readers were scared off by one peculiar review. Schimmel is wise and fair: so is his book. The review, sad to say, was neither.

Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.
Calvin Theological Seminary
Grand Rapids, MI

In his review of my book *The Seven Deadly Sins*, Jacob Neusner has committed the grave intellectual and moral sin of reviewing a book that he obviously did not read. At most he skimmed a few pages and, as we shall see, one of the two indices. Neusner says, for example, that "in the pages of this book, God makes no appearance at all." How did he arrive at such an absurd and patently false conclusion? Neusner looked at the Name index under "God" and saw no entry other than "see Lord." Thus his assertion. However, had he read the book, or even bothered to look at the Subject index under "God," he would have seen more than eighty (80) page references to "God."

Neusner says that "Schimmel treats the writings of Reform rabbis with their homiletical free association." The two works by Reform rabbis cited in the book (Roland Gittleson and Eugene Borowitz) are neither homiletical nor free-associative. Borowitz's *Choosing a Sex Ethic* is a sophisticated analysis of four different "sex ethics," or moral rationales for heterosexual relationships: "healthy orgasm," "mutual consent," "love," and "marriage." I suggest that Borowitz's "analysis of the ethical and psychological issues that one should consider in arriving at a mature and honest personal sexual ethic is a model that psychologists might adopt when working with clients

who have to decide on their sexual lifestyles. . . . Decisions about one's sexual behavior should not be made in the heat of passion, or on psychological grounds alone, but must include ethical analysis."

One further indication that Neusner has yet to read the book that he reviewed: "Why people commit the seven deadly sins doesn't really interest Schimmel," he says. The truth, though, is that a substantial section of the chapters devoted to each of the seven deadly sins deals precisely with motives for sinning. In the chapter on Greed, for example, I ask, "Why do people pursue wealth?" and go on to provide nine motives. . . . I conclude "that there are many motives for pursuing money and wealth. Usually several of these combine to influence the behavior of any single individual. The moralists consider inordinate efforts to accumulate possessions as avaricious when our motives are selfish or hedonistic, our means unjust, and we put our trust in riches." Similar analyses are made for each of the sins. So much for my alleged lack of interest in why people commit the seven deadly sins.

Neusner criticizes me for not mentioning Kant or Hobbes or Bernard Gert and other contemporary moral theologians and philosophers. . . . Had Neusner read the first chapter of the book he would have known that I am writing neither as a theologian nor a philosopher but primarily as a psychologist and student of Jewish and Christian devotional literature. The objective of the book is to bring classical, medieval, and premodern reflections and very practical teachings on emotion, passion, vice, and virtue to the attention of modern, secular individuals and to mental health professionals. . . . To bring to the attention of my audience a penetrating psychological insight of Ecclesiastes, Seneca, Bahya Ibn Pakuda, Francis de Sales, Jeremy Taylor, or Cotton Mather must I really name-drop Kant or Hobbes or Gert? One would hardly know from what Neusner wrote that the book is about psychology and psychotherapy and makes no pretensions to moral philosophy. Unlike Neusner himself, I confide

my writing to areas in which I have some competence.

Neusner writes that "You can't have the advantages of religion if you're not religious. Religion is not useful. It's true. Or it's not true. But it's never meant to be merely useful." Well here, at least, we can have a substantive debate. . . . I agree that you can't have all of the advantages of religion if you're not religious, but you can have some of them—namely those aspects of religious teachings and understandings of human nature that seem to you to be true. . . . I also agree that religion is never meant to be merely useful. But among the various things it is meant to be, it is also meant to be useful. And so I seek to appropriate from it that which is useful even to those who are not religious but who are striving to lead ethical and spiritually meaningful lives.

Neusner is annoyed by the fact that I quote many authors, as if I am quoting them because of their "authority." I quote extensively because I want to give neglected thinkers who wrote with brilliance and passion an opportunity to be heard by moderns. The only "authority" they have for me is the logic of what they have to say. Unlike so many of my colleagues in the field of psychology, who are ignorant of or hostile to the writings of religious thinkers and Greco-Roman moralists, I find much in what they have to say—and in how they say it—meaningful and practical, whether or not I believe in their particular God or gods.

Neusner mocks my appeal to psychotherapists that they make greater use of art and imagination in devising treatment plans for their patients (a suggestion tangential to the central thesis of the book, which is that psychotherapy is not and should not be value-neutral, although many mental health professionals think that it can be so). Is he unaware of the powerful effects that drama, music, and literature have on shaping human behavior? Why shouldn't that power be harnessed to therapeutic purposes? Neusner is obviously unaware of bibliotherapy, music therapy, and art therapy, therapeutic approaches that

are insufficiently utilized by most psychotherapists.

Neusner finds my book boring. I too find the prose of Name indices boring. As far as the book itself, however, unsolicited readers' comments (e.g., "Thank you for writing the best book I've read in many years"; "Your writing is rich, interesting, and convincing . . . original and of unique value"), reviews by others who have actually read it (including a starred review in *Publishers Weekly*—reserved for books of unusual merit and interest) and sales figures suggest that it is actually quite exciting. Perhaps when Neusner has some free time he can read *The Seven Deadly Sins* and enjoy it too.

Solomon Schimmel
Professor of Jewish Education
and Psychology
Hebrew College
Brookline, MA

Jacob Neusner replies:

"At most he skimmed a few pages. . . ." Now, now! Outraged (if utterly baseless) accusations about the reviewer's not having read the book are to chagrined authors what patriotism is to scoundrels. I regret to deprive Dr. Schimmel of the last refuge for his self-esteem, but I really did read his book, as evidenced by the simple fact that half of the review is devoted to a detailed and meticulously accurate survey of its contents, along with sizable quotations of his clumsy prose.

Then I formed an adverse opinion of his book. Now I know the reason. His response does not show the philosophical perspicacity to grasp the central point of my criticism.

I said that the book is not interested in *why* people sin—though promising "reflections on human nature." His reply imagines that I meant to allege that he didn't add up the nine reasons for this sin and the four reasons for that sin. But of course he did exactly that—which is monumentally beside the point. What I had in mind was to hold the book to its professed goal, which was—in Schimmel's own words—to conduct "reflections on human nature." That purpose I took to mean, in my words, "human nature on the one side, ethics and moral responsibility on the other." These enduring mysteries of human nature Schimmel reduces to "motives for sinning." But the nine "motives for sinning" are not the same thing as the profound reflections on human nature such as Gert (among many) in our own time, Kant and Hobbes in times past—and, in Scripture, Jeremiah and Paul, not to mention the Author of Genesis One through Eleven!—undertook.

Schimmel's book surveys everything but the main thing, because all it really does is cite and quote and paraphrase, but never interpret and explain and speculate. In this intemperate and unfortunate screed of his, Schimmel himself sets forth the best

vindication of my criticism of his book when he notes his "nine motives" for the pursuit of wealth as ample proof that he has discussed human nature as do Kant, Hobbes, and Gert, Moses, Jeremiah, and Paul. But his book is an anthology, a scrapbook, for all it does is collect and arrange this and that. Now come the loud huzzahs of self-praise and self-promotion to celebrate the book's "accomplishment" ("a starred review in *Publishers Weekly*" indeed!).

I said Schimmel's book was a collection of banalities and commonplaces, a pedestrian exercise in intellectually primitive collecting and arranging, and now Schimmel's reply sets out to prove I understated matters. I offer in defense of my review's judgment this splenetic response of his, which once more reminds us never to lose our temper in print.

Correction

I would like to correct an error in my review of J. A. DiNoia's *The Diversity of Religions* (February). In discussing the doctrine that "there is no salvation outside the church," I noted that the stricture applied "primarily not to non-Christians" but to Christians who had turned from the Church. The qualifying *non-* was inadvertently omitted.

Roger Kimball
New York, NY

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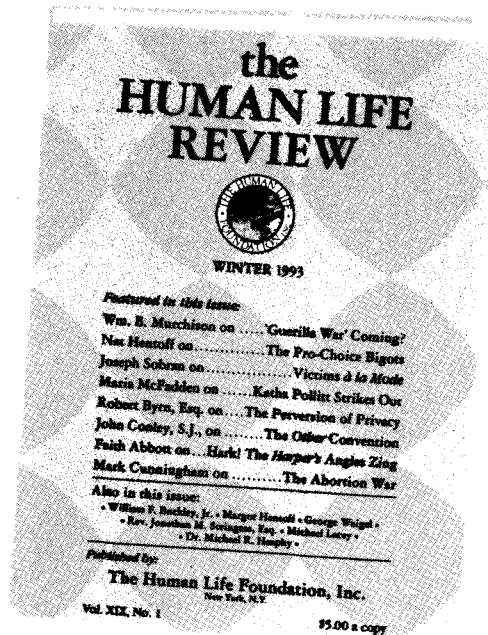
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Another feature: we periodically reprint the best of *our* own stuff as well; for instance, we recently re-ran a fine article by the late great Malcolm Muggeridge (for many years our Editor-at-Large) on “Medical Progress and the Soul,” which first ran back in 1985, but it's even *more* timely today—the prophetic “St. Mugg” foresaw the rush to provide “spare” human body parts! (Future issues will carry other classic Muggeridge pieces too.)

The **current issue** contains 14 hard-hitting pieces, including William Murchison on the coming “Guerilla War” over abortion, Nat Hentoff on “Pro-Choice Bigots,” Joseph Sobran on “Victims à la Mode,” Maria McFadden on “Katha Pollitt Strikes Out,” Robert Byrn on “The Perversion of Privacy.” Plus Faith Abbott's fascinating analysis of the recent symposium in *Harper's* magazine on the question: “She's come for an abortion. What do you say?” Answers came from well-known writers like Susan Faludi and William F. Buckley Jr. (Abbott explains it all in “Hark! The *Harper's* Angles Zing”).

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Opinion

The Newtape File II

Dear Nephew, my hellborn one, Ah, how I delight in writing you as my esteemed Uncle, Screwtape, once instructed me, he of diabolical dishonor, now emeritus. He has well earned his current sojourn in a New York City establishment that goes by the pithy name, Sex. I fear, however, that Uncle may be nearly exhausted and well-nigh flummoxed; indeed, he may even be somewhat vexed. For the perverse pleasures of this cavern of delicious iniquity have outstripped even his imagination. (But, then, he is over thirty.) I understand that our own Madonna of Manichean Delectations (oh, what a treasure she is, what a splendid job I have done—for she has been my special assignment, as you know) dictated the decor. And here, I confess, she has gone beyond even my instructions. For the decor is alive: human bodies poised and posed as if on the very brink of entry into the Kingdom Below. The weekly news-magazines calmly report this as if it were mere reportage of normal everyday life in what the locals call The Big Apple.

Think of it, Beelzebubkin! The glorious free publicity, the “normalizing” (as in-vogue academic jargon of the standard inelegant sort would have it) of what was once extreme. I drooled profusely as I read the report, so much so that my bile count dropped precipitously. Indeed, I am being transfused as I dictate. I am all aquiver as I picture in my mind’s fiendish eye the following: “Two guys hung from the ceiling in chains and black leather. A female on all fours held her hindquarters up to the cat-o’-nine-tails. Hard-bodied couples struck the straining poses of simulated sex. On a giant video screen, the evening’s star knelt to shave a man’s pubic hair. All the while, dance music throbbed. The occasion? A New York book party, naturally.”

This Madonna is a wonder, a prime candidate for Demonification, for induction into the cloven-footed Hall of Infamy. Her book, also called *Sex*, costs nearly \$50 and sold 150,000 copies on the first day. All the lonely people—bored and with money to spare. What is most delicious about all this is that it transpires under the word “Freedom.” We have succeeded beyond our wildest imaginings in making tens of thousands believe they are engaging in strong and courageous action by buying, viewing, and—best

yet—engaging in untrammelled lewd and licentious behavior. They are the prophets of progress. Theirs is the “philosophy of the future,” as Uncle Screwtape once wrote. Our devilkin, Madonna, describes her mission as “opening people’s minds.” (Their pocket-books, too, but mentioning that would no doubt be supererogatory.) She proclaims to adoring legions that she is a “revolutionary.” She fights foes of “free expression.” We are working hard not to allow her the merest glimmer of how ludicrous her position is—pushing on a wide-open door as if she were bursting through a ten-foot-thick cement wall en route to the glorious goal of Freedom. For our task has been to perversely (how else?) inculcate the notion that late-twentieth-century moderns in the West live in a world that is constrained and embattled and beset by what we have got people to call “Victorianism.” I must constrain myself—I am now braying with such hysterical delight I threaten to dislodge my bile tube.

Can you not see what we have accomplished, dear Nephew? Two citations may help to illustrate my central point, one you seem not quite to have mastered or you would be enjoying somewhat better success with those annoying Smiths in Fremont, Nebraska I mentioned in my last letter. A nineteenth-century writer, whose lightly-worn piety we were never able to dislodge, one Alexis de Tocqueville, proclaimed—I shudder to repeat it—that “the soul has wants which must be satisfied.” That pesky word “soul.” It was an uphill battle for us until the happy day we dislodged that notion, confining it to the musty dustbin of pious memory or empty incantation. Savor the victory for Our Father Below embodied in the transformation of that wretched soul business into our Old Nickian ally Woody Allen’s insistence that “the heart wants what it wants.” I scripted this myself, murmuring it over and over as Allen prepared for his press announcement professing love for his (more or less) adopted daughter.

“More or less” is important, Nephew, please take note. For this locution speaks to our tremendous victories in dispelling any solidity or gravitas, as The Enemy might have it, to the notion of “family.” Our Woody took advantage of it—we have worked hard to nurture his narcissism—and thus he could honestly—honestly!—claim that the teenager he had photographed nude and bedded was not only not his biological child, she was not properly his adopted child either—for he had never married his companion of eleven years although they have a bio-child together. He is merely sleeping with his ex-lover’s daughter and, as he stressed in one of his many delicious interviews with the press, “I could have met her at a party or something. . . . I was not a father to [Mia’s] adopted kids in any sense of the word. . . . The last thing I was interested in was the whole parcel of Mia’s children.”

A chthonian wonder, is it not? Woody is "in love" and that's that.

That nuisance Miss Manners may pose a problem here, for she was overheard to jest that the incest taboo may be universal everywhere save in New York. This is the sort of humor we can do without—it may set people's minds to thinking. We need to keep them focused on Woody's words: "I don't find any moral dilemmas whatsoever. I didn't feel that just because she was Mia's daughter, there was any great dilemma."

Fortunately, Our Madonna keeps coming through for us because she portrays her exhibitionism as a crusade, and I am genuinely giddy at the way she mouths our platitudes and insistently eviscerates not only Freedom but Truth of any of The Enemy's meanings and designs. Perhaps, my serpentine one, you were too busy trying to disrupt Mother Smith's work at the local hospice (the snide comments from her feckless "friend" that Mrs. Smith had been looking a bit worn and dowdy of late and should take more time "for herself" was a nice touch—good work!) to catch Our Madonna's film, *Truth or Dare*. I was so deeply touched, indeed moved, by the simulated sex scenes played out against an altar-like backdrop, the writhing in a nun-like habit with a large cross flopping against Our Madonna's bosom, and, oh, splendid shiver of demonic delight, the prayers led by Our Madonna herself before each exhibitionistic frenzy she calls "art." She actually invokes The Enemy, praying for success in trashing all He holds dear and manages, with that dogged stubbornness for which He is well-loathed by Our Father Below, to instill yet—at this late date—into altogether too many puny "souls" not yet transformed into obsessively grasping hearts that "want what they want."

You must watch this film on video, Nephew: it is elixir for the flagging spirit. "Truth," you see, is a confession of all one's "fantasies," and in this confession lies freedom. One dares to be free. One is brave. One is a freedom fighter! Our North Americans love this kind of talk, especially when it taps that residue of anti-Catholicism we have ever striven mightily to promote.

One moment in the film I especially treasure. I "freeze" it whenever I screen it in my properly chilled loft: Our Madonna, her hair demurely covered by a scarf, her body demurely covered by a black dress, her eyes hidden behind dark glasses, reading her Freedom Sermon of an appropriate two minutes length with the cameras clicking, the flashes popping, the videos whirring, the microphones humming. Oh, cursed image, how treasured: she was in Rome and fighting our foe, Pope John Paul II, for it seems the Vatican had issued a statement questioning Our Madonna's entertainment standards. Our Madonna responded earnestly (this is how we must get all to respond, including those not-yet-damned Smiths) that she was the victim

of repression, and "as an American," she protested the Vatican's "censorship" in the name of the most fundamental of all freedoms, "freedom of expression." Oh, I could wax so eloquently on this juicy reduction of freedom to "express yourself." It is so cloven-footed! So demonolatric! Although you are not philosophically inclined, Nephew, just think for a moment: Express Yourself. Here, tidily encapsulated, are gnostic moments of the most limpid sort.

Your affectionate uncle,
Newtape

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Jesus Through the Eyes of John Rawls

Gilbert Meilaender

Of late I have been reading John B. Meier's *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*. I have enjoyed it, not least because the book is clearly and carefully written, even if the Jesus who emerges from these pages is not exactly the "startling" figure promised by the dust jacket. But I have also been remembering the standard critique leveled at the several different quests for the historical Jesus: that the questers found in Jesus someone who turned out to reflect their own place and time. If Meier's portrait is, as the dust jacket again assures us, "the portrait of Jesus for the end of the twentieth century," what does that tell us about our time and place?

One sentence in particular brought me up short. As Meier begins to discuss what we can know of the family of Jesus, he notes that in ancient Palestine the "family" would be a large extended family. "Correspondingly," he writes, "an 'individual' understood himself or herself differently in the ancient world. The individual was not an isolated, completely autonomous person—as some Americans foolishly think they are today—but rather a part of a larger, sprawling social unit." Now, teaching ethics as I do, I am programmed to respond to such sentences. And what a peculiar sentence this is from the pen of one who seeks, as does Meier, to be a careful scholar, never saying more than the historian can honestly say. What makes him suppose he can toss off normative judgments so cavalierly—unless, of course, he has simply taken them in from the surrounding culture, without really thinking them through?

My concern here is not to defend the notion of the autonomous individual—a problematic enough notion, but one for which there is at least something to be said—but, instead, to puzzle over the casual nature of Meier's judgment. Whenever in the course of his investigation of the historical Jesus Meier encounters arguments for which little evidence is offered, he likes to say that "what is gratuitously asserted may be gratuitously denied." Yet when he strays from his own discipline into another, he himself seems to have gratuitous assertion near at hand. Constantly attempting, as he tells us, to bracket from his scientific method of investigation "faith-knowledge" and to "prescind" from the teachings of the church, he nevertheless—in as naive a fashion as one can imagine—fails to bracket the "knowledge" he has imbibed from the political culture around him, knowledge which assures him that our society has been mistaken in its exaltation of the individual. Of one thing we may be confident: the Jesus whom Meier will find and present (in further promised volumes) is not likely to be one who establishes an encounter between the lone individual and God, nor one who thereby is a formative influence in the Western understanding of the individual.

But Meier is far more a child of our political and moral tradition of individualism than he realizes. Indeed, the hypothesis he uses to frame his undertaking is, I think, more a political metaphor than a scientific method. Here is his way of explaining what he is up to in the book:

Suppose that a Catholic, a Protestant, a Jew, and an agnostic—all honest historians cognizant of first-century religious movements—were locked up in the bowels of the Harvard Divinity School library, put on a spartan diet, and not allowed to emerge until they had hammered out a consensus document on who Jesus of Nazareth was and what he intended in his own time and place.

Meier recognizes that such a document would not tell the whole truth, since it would have to find a way around some differences and would inevitably have a somewhat narrow focus. But it would also, he suggests, give us some sense of what any reasonable person would say about the historical Jesus and thus might provide "a starting point for dialogue between Christians and Jews, between various Christian confessions, and between believers and nonbelievers." Another way in which he describes the resulting document is, however, more revealing, and is essentially a political metaphor (though one taken from the religious disputes of the sixteenth century): the document would be a "formula of concord." It would, that is, be a means for warring factions to get along in some kind of peace and harmony. It would offer something

analogous to what political theorists call a "thin theory of the good"—seeking agreement only on what seems necessary for our common life.

The longer we think about this use of a political metaphor, the less appropriate it may seem—and the less certain we may be about what it even means. How exactly does the conclave work when this Catholic, Protestant, Jew, and agnostic—scrupulous scientific historians all—get together? How is it that they reach some consensus? Perhaps Meier imagines them as occupying John Rawls' "original position," knowing none of the particularities of their personal histories. But that can hardly be; for then the gathering might be any four people. There would be no significance at all to the fact that this consensus is achieved among four people of different religious commitments. It might just as easily be four Protestants; for whatever the participants are in particular has been checked outside in the lobby. This is, of course, only another way of saying that, on Meier's hypothesis, the four participants—since they could be anyone—would be the isolated, completely autonomous persons whom Meier says it would be foolish even to imagine.

If that is not the right way to picture this conclave, what is? Perhaps we should think of the participants as carrying along with them their sincerely held beliefs about the good and the true but agreeing, for the sake of consensus, not to put forward those beliefs in the course of the conversation. This would mean that they are in effect agreeing to adhere to some other vision of the truth—a vision governed, evidently, by a notion of what scientific history permits or requires. That vision all the participants would share, and to it each could add whatever other beliefs he may acquire from "faith" or from ecclesiastical authority.

As a political method for achieving a certain measure of freedom and security in our common life, such an approach has merit. Even in politics it fails us sometimes, when the stakes are just too high. It fails us, in particular, when crucial issues about the meaning of our humanity and the scope of our community are at stake—as it did when our nation finally confronted the fact of slavery, and as it does in some respects when we argue about abortion today. But most of the time this method serves us well, because in politics—at least, the liberal politics of our tradition from which Meier's metaphor derives—we do not seek the truth. We seek only a framework within which all can pursue their respective visions of the true, the good, and the eternal. As a method aimed at seeking truth, however, this approach is misplaced. If we seek to export it from the realm of the political into the whole of life, it will lead us to suppose that some of our most important beliefs can be simply detached from the rest of our "knowledge" without thereby altering in any way what is left.

This seems unlikely. Even more important, per-

haps, it seems boring. Certainly it does not seem very promising as “a starting point for dialogue between Christians and Jews, between various Christian confessions, and between believers and nonbelievers.” For in that dialogue what I need and want to hear from you is not what you can say after you have bracketed the things you believe most deeply. What I need and want to hear is the faith you live by. And, interestingly, when I hear that from you I am hearing not from “an isolated, completely autonomous person” but from one who belongs to a very extended “family” indeed. It turns out, I fear, that Meier’s scientific historian is the isolated, autonomous individual—dependent on his own insight to eke out an account that seems rational to him. Whether this is really a method of scientific history—or just the influence of our liberal political tradition creeping in where it has no business, because we have not learned to think hard enough about politics to know when to keep it in its place—is, I think, a question worth pondering.

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Homosexuality and the Moral Order

Linda Chavez

President Clinton’s decision to lift the ban against homosexuals in the military has opened a deep cultural divide in American public opinion that extends beyond the immediate issue to questions of morality, convention, and social order. Judging from the vituperation on the editorial pages and the angry outpouring from talk radio to the White House telephone lines, it is one more issue on which elite and popular opinion fiercely diverge. The editors of *The New Republic*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and others would have it that anyone who opposes the acceptance of homosexuals in the military is motivated by bigotry and irrational fear. The common bias against homosexual behavior, however, is neither irrational nor necessarily mean-spirited but reflects a rational desire to establish limits on sexual behavior necessary to maintain the social order and protect the family.

Sex is not merely a private matter. No society recog-

nizes the right of individuals to engage in sexually gratifying acts whenever, wherever, and with whomever they want. Intricate codes of behavior and social sanction apply to this most private of activities, and most of these aim at preserving the basic social unit, the family. Historically, virtually all societies have condemned incest, adultery, and homosexuality because such practices, in distinctive ways, threaten the family. What has varied over time and place has been the punishment imposed for violating these bans. In our modern, generally tolerant society, few sanctions apply to those who engage in these practices so long as they occur, as we are fond of repeating, between consenting adults. Indeed, over the last twenty-five years, we have become increasingly tolerant of sexually permissive behavior. But that tolerance has had consequences. We face epidemics in sexually transmitted diseases, teenage pregnancies, abortions, illegitimacy, rape, and sexual abuse. Marriage rates are on the decline, and divorce is on the increase, especially among younger couples. The American family may not yet be an endangered species, but it is far from thriving.

In this atmosphere, it is both understandable and prudent to draw the line at approving homosexual behavior. Many of those who favor lifting the ban against homosexuals in the military claim they are not seeking approval of homosexual behavior. As *The New Republic* declared in a recent editorial: “No one is urging the approval or promotion of homosexual acts among military personnel; all that is at stake is that homosexuals, if they so wish, should be able to disclose their sexuality without fear of direct retribution. This minimal level of toleration implies no approval of any activity, merely acquiescence in the free existence of the other.” But that assurance rings hollow in light of the increasing pressure to accept homosexuality as relatively common, benign, unalterable, and, most important, deserving of equal treatment with heterosexuality. Television in particular, both in entertainment and news programs, virtually indoctrinates the viewing public with the message that homosexual behavior is—or should be—acceptable. Homosexual characters have appeared on “Roseanne,” “L.A. Law,” “Coach,” “Northern Exposure,” “Picket Fences,” “thirtysomething,” and dozens of other shows, almost always in portrayals meant to show that, but for the prejudice of homophobes, homosexuals lead ordinary, even exemplary, lives. However, the empirical evidence we have suggests that a great many homosexuals, perhaps a majority, lead lives far different from their idealized TV portrayal.

According to one of the most extensive studies of the subject, *Homosexualities: A Study of Diversity Among Men and Women* (1978), only about 3 percent of male homosexuals are relatively monogamous, defined in the study as having ten or fewer lifetime partners. Promiscuity among the homosexual

population “would boggle the heterosexual mind,” says Michael Fumento, author of a book on AIDS, noting studies of early AIDS patients who reported an average of 1,100 sexual partners. The prevalence of sexually transmitted disease among homosexuals far exceeds that in the general population by a factor of as much as twenty, depending on the disease. Disturbing as well are estimates that even though homosexuals make up only 3 to 7 percent of the population (according to most reliable data), about one-third of recorded instances of child molestation involve male sodomy.

Clearly not all homosexuals lead dissolute or criminal lives. As *The New Republic* notes, homosexuality “ranges the full gamut of human experience, from the most irenic of spiritual bonds to the most compulsive of physical acts.” Many of us have known homosexuals, or persons we have assumed to be homosexual, who lead temperate, even staid, lives. By and large, such persons have no interest in divulging the details of their sexual activity any more than most heterosexuals do. While we ought to treat such persons humanely and compassionately and respect their right to privacy—so long as their sexual behavior occurs in private—that should be the limit of our tolerance. To do more, for example to confer spousal or adoption rights to homosexual partners or even to forbid all forms of discrimination against those who engage in homosexual behavior, is to legitimate that behavior.

That is not, however, meant to imply that homosexuals may be mistreated with impunity. They have a right to be safe and secure in their persons and property, to earn a living, to participate in civic life, to express their views—in short, the rights that all other individuals enjoy in a free society. But because homosexuality is—or should properly be—defined by behavior, homosexuals enjoy no special rights to be protected in an area where behavior routinely determines disparate treatment. Landlords or employers, who are free to restrict rentals or jobs to nonsmokers for example, should not be forced to rent rooms to or hire persons whose behavior they find objectionable. (In a free market economy, discrimination of this sort is likely to be somewhat limited, since there will always be some landlords and employers who either do not disapprove of homosexual behavior or who determine that it is less relevant, for their purposes, than paying the rent or showing up for work on time.)

Most homosexual activists are not content simply to be left alone or to be accorded only individual rights. Instead, they crave affirmation, which is why the issue of lifting the ban against homosexuals in the military has aroused such passion. If homosexual behavior, like drug use or criminal activity, can disqual-

ify someone from the right to serve his or her country, then it is a sure sign that such behavior is socially disapproved of. But what if homosexuals do not freely choose their sexual identity? “Are they to be despised and rejected because of what they are—because of a status nature gave them?” pleads Anthony Lewis in the *New York Times*. The empirical evidence that homosexual orientation is biologically determined is mixed. But even if a biological link were established, that would not justify sanctioning the behavior, any more than it would justify condoning other aspects of anti-social human behavior for which biological links have been established, such as crime. As James Q. Wilson and Richard Herrnstein point out in their book *Crime and Human Nature* (1985), although there is substantial evidence that those who bear certain biological traits will commit certain crimes, those traits do not cause the criminal behavior: “The existence of biological predispositions means that circumstances that activate criminal behavior in one person will not do so in another.” Similarly, persons whose sexual orientation is homosexual still make decisions about their behavior.

Sexual desire in all its forms is a powerful but not after all uncontrollable determinant of human behavior. Most human beings learn to harness and direct their sexual desires in a socially appropriate manner, which finds its ultimate expression in marriage. That often means periods of sexual abstinence or, at the very least, the denial of gratification from each and every object of sexual attraction. Even so, most people learn to live within these limits. And those who choose not to must put up with the onus society attaches to their behavior. Should homosexuals be absolved of the burden others bear? The alternative is to give up on the notion that society has any right to impose rules on sexual behavior. We have already moved dangerously far down that path and are gaining momentum. But marriage and the family will not survive in a society that recognizes no limits to personal sexual gratification. A great many people will decide that fidelity and child-rearing require too much sacrifice and denial and will simply abandon both duties when they have been stripped of the special honor with which our traditional moral code invests them. It is this fear—that ultimately we may be forfeiting our basic social institutions—that makes so many of us indisposed to eliminate yet another sexual taboo.

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Picture Perfect: The Politics of Prenatal Testing

Elizabeth Kristol

During the past two decades, prenatal screening for fetal defects has become a standard part of nearly every pregnant woman's medical care. Tests conducted during the first half of pregnancy are designed to detect a wide range of genetic and other disorders, and to give women the option of obtaining abortions if defects are diagnosed. Some people have heralded this development as a breakthrough in the age-old war against disease. Others regard it as more than that: a tool to improve society. Modern birth control methods, the argument goes, brought us quantity control; the addition of prenatal testing offers a system of quality control. For the first time in history, parents are able to customize, albeit in limited ways, the kinds of children they bring into the world.

Prenatal diagnosis may be a routine procedure, but it raises a number of troubling issues. While the women who avail themselves of the tests are usually worried about their children's health, the political, legal, and medical communities have their own reasons for encouraging large-scale screening for fetal defects. Unbeknownst to most prospective parents, moreover, scientists are still debating the safety of the most widely offered screening tests. The ethical issues raised by prenatal screening are even touchier.

Prenatal testing is eradicating illness in a whole new way—preemptively. In so doing, it is imperceptibly altering the pattern of disease in this country. It is changing society's fundamental attitudes toward parenting, toward sickness, and toward social responsibility. It is even influencing women's notions of

childbirth, medicine, and motherhood.

The most common form of prenatal testing is ultrasound imaging, which uses sound waves to produce a picture—or “sonogram”—of the fetus. Today, more than 80 percent of all pregnant women in the United States receive a sonogram during their pregnancy. Women deemed at “high risk” for giving birth to a child with chromosomal abnormalities are also offered amniocentesis, a procedure in which a needle, guided by ultrasound, is inserted into the uterus and withdraws a small amount of amniotic fluid for cell analysis. Amniocentesis is usually done between the sixteenth and twentieth weeks of pregnancy. Women may also opt for the somewhat riskier procedure of chorionic villus sampling (CVS), which is usually done between the tenth and twelfth weeks, or earlier on an experimental basis. CVS removes a small amount of chorionic villi (hair-like fringes of the placenta) for analysis, either by using a catheter to pass through the cervix to the womb or by inserting a needle into the abdomen.

Since CVS and amniocentesis are invasive procedures that can harm both the mother and the developing fetus, researchers have long sought a method of testing that cannot endanger mother or child. In the early seventies scientists discovered that high levels of alphafetoprotein (AFP), which is usually leaked from the fetus into the mother's bloodstream in very small quantities, could indicate the presence of neural-tube defects such as anencephaly (incomplete development of the brain) and spina bifida (malformation of the spine), defects that affect one to two in every 1,000 live births. In 1983 it was discovered that an unusually *low* level of AFP in the mother's bloodstream was a possible indication of

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Down's syndrome. A simple blood test for AFP is frequently offered to women—regardless of age and known genetic risk factors—between the sixteenth to eighteenth week of pregnancy. After ultrasound, it is the second most common form of prenatal testing.

More experimental and high-risk diagnostic procedures include cordocentesis (which examines fetal blood drawn from the umbilical cord), fetal skin sampling, and fetoscopy. And what had long been considered the cutting edge of prenatal screening—the testing of embryos before implantation—is slowly becoming a reality. In this method, a couple undergoes in vitro fertilization, and the resulting embryos are genetically analyzed. The healthiest are implanted in the mother, while those bearing signs of genetic defect are discarded. Future forms of testing may push the screening process still earlier, before conception has taken place; research is already underway into the testing of oocytes before fertilization.

These experimental forms of genetic screening are clearly controversial. But even the most common forms of prenatal testing are open to dispute. Despite the matter-of-fact manner in which physicians offer the tests to their patients, their safety has never been scientifically established. Ultrasound, for example, which doctors present as a thoroughly uncontroversial procedure, is still being contested within the medical literature. A classic example of a “creeping technology,” ultrasound in pregnancy has never been subjected to a large-scale randomized controlled trial to assess either its safety or usefulness. Ann Oakley, a historian of maternal medicine, has compared the growing use of ultrasound with that of X-rays, which became popular after the turn of the century and were widely used on pregnant women until it was discovered, a half-century later, that they could cause cancer in children.

The FDA regulates the energy output and manufacture of ultrasound devices, but there is no licensing or testing of those who operate the machines. Because of variations in scanning conditions and tissue properties, moreover, doses cannot be measured exactly; an NIH consensus conference on ultrasound concluded that “there are no data on the dose to either the mother or the fetus in the clinical setting.” The participants also noted that numerous animal studies suggest that exposing a fetus to ultrasound can affect prenatal growth, although there is considerable debate over whether the energy levels used in animal studies can predict the effect of lower levels of energy on humans.

The controversy surrounding ultrasound centers on whether the benefits of its use during routine pregnancies exceed its unknown long-term effects. Prenatal ultrasound is primarily used to verify conditions that the doctor or patient already suspects: it double-checks a diagnosis of pregnancy, establishes the age of the fetus, and confirms conditions—such

as ectopic pregnancy, multiple pregnancy, or fetal death—that the doctor has deduced from the patient's symptoms or the results of a physical examination. It may also reveal previously undetected fetal diseases or structural disorders in the mother. American and European researchers have repeatedly tried to determine whether the knowledge gained via ultrasound leads to a healthier baby, yet studies evaluating the impact of ultrasound on such key measurements as perinatal morbidity and mortality, birth weight, and Apgar scores (tests conducted immediately after an infant's birth) have failed to establish any statistically significant effects.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, following the formal position of the American College of Radiologists, has shied away from endorsing “routine” prenatal ultrasound. But in all its literature ACOG simply assumes that obstetricians will offer ultrasound as part of standard prenatal care. As one editor of an obstetrics journal wrote, “Although ultrasound screening is not absolutely necessary for routine prenatal care, I think its use as a screening examination in early pregnancy is here to stay.” It is left to the rare critic, such as Stephen Thacker of the Centers for Disease Control, to make the obvious point that “the acquisition of more information and the clinical impression that a procedure is beneficial do not necessarily lead to better outcomes.”

Amniocentesis and CVS do pose known dangers, and a physician is supposed to discuss these with the patient at the time the tests are offered and have her sign an informed-consent form. There is a miscarriage rate of 1-2 percent following CVS. The procedure also carries a small risk of uterine infection. In addition, recent studies in the United States and abroad have linked CVS to a number of birth defects, including missing or stubby fingers and toes, small tongues, underdeveloped jaws, and, in some instances, missing limbs.

Estimates of the possibility of miscarriage following amniocentesis range between .5 and 1 percent. Other documented long-term risks to children tested by amniocentesis include breathing and orthopedic problems, particularly club foot. There is also a possibility that the needle may come into contact with the fetus; one Canadian study discovered needle marks on six out of ninety-one infants whose mothers had the test. On rare occasions, deformities may result from a tap that depletes the amount of amniotic fluid to a dangerous level.

In both CVS and amniocentesis, an initial tap may prove unsuccessful. The doctor may fail to draw enough fluid, he may obtain urine instead of amniotic fluid, or cells in the sample may fail to grow. In such instances, the procedure may have to be repeated, which compounds the risk to the patient.

How is it that perfectly healthy women may find themselves having a series of medical tests, some of which pose distinct risks to themselves or their children? The typical pregnant woman would be disturbed to realize that a good deal of the testing that goes on is motivated by factors that are, at best, tangentially related to her well-being or the health of her child.

The use of AFP tests has a peculiarly nonmedical history. Both ACOG and the American Academy of Pediatrics urged the FDA not to approve early release of AFP test kits in the late 1970s. They noted that in order to detect enough cases of open spina bifida and anencephaly the tests would necessarily have a high false-positive rate—about fifty false positives for every true positive. They recommended that the FDA make its release contingent on laboratories' ability to coordinate follow-up tests to weed out false positives, a crucial concern in a test parents may rely on in deciding whether to continue a pregnancy. But when the FDA went ahead and approved the marketing of the kits without these restrictions, ACOG's legal department promptly issued a liability "alert" to its members, urging all obstetricians to offer the procedure to their patients. This, it said, should place the doctor in the "best possible defense position" in the event of a birth defect.

The momentum generated by this single recommendation—inspired by law rather than medicine—was powerful. To offset the inaccuracy of AFP tests, ACOG developed a rigorous protocol for obstetricians. If AFP levels are unusually high, for instance, doctors are urged to repeat the test. If the second test also comes back positive they are to do an ultrasound to determine the reason for the elevated AFP level (such as multiple pregnancy or inaccurate assessment of fetal age). If that is inconclusive, they are to advance to amniocentesis. If that is abnormal, they are to perform a high-resolution ultrasound. With each subsequent test, there is an increased chance that any number of anomalies, slight or severe, may be detected. Thus, a patient who follows her doctor's suggestion to undergo testing for neural-tube defects might find herself, a few weeks down the line, being counseled to contemplate an abortion for a variety of lesser disorders for which she had no original intention of seeking testing.

Like the medical community, the public health sector has its own reasons for promoting widespread prenatal screening. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has announced a goal of screening at least 90 percent of the U.S. population "for fetal abnormalities," an objective that "will be measured by tracking use of maternal serum alpha-fetoprotein screening tests." The HHS report that explains this goal states that "current ACOG standards recommend that MSAFP screening be offered to all patients"—without noting that this was a legal,

not medical, recommendation. Likewise, the California Department of Health, as part of its ambitious statewide screening program, requires everyone who offers prenatal care to inform pregnant patients of the AFP test in an effort to detect greater numbers of potential birth defects. The fact is that governments on both the state and national level have considerable interest in being able to point to reductions in disease. And morbidity and mortality rates are key expressions of a region's standard of living.

When most people hear of "reducing illness," they usually think of providing greater access to health care or developing new treatments for disease. Public health experts, however, frequently boast of reducing illness by means of prenatal diagnosis and abortion. The highly influential 1983 report of the President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research asserted that "genetic screening and counseling" may be used "to contribute to the public health goals of reducing the incidence and impact of inherited disorders." Similarly, an article heralding the "Decline of Down's Syndrome after Abortion Reform in New York State" boasted that "in 1975, terminations resulted in abortion of one-quarter of the expected cases of Down's syndrome in upstate New York and one-half of the cases in New York City. . . . [I]t appears that abortion reform has become an effective measure to reduce the incidence of severe mental retardation." In England, the journal *Prenatal Diagnosis* reported one regional study in which abortions after a diagnosis of neural-tube defects led to an 86 percent reduction in the birth of individuals with these disorders. The authors concluded that "the success of the program in medical terms is apparent."

Policymakers and medical experts are under pressure not only to achieve noticeable improvements in health but also to reduce soaring health care costs. Widespread prenatal screening followed by abortion for fetal defects would accomplish both of these objectives. The motivation to reduce costs also helps explain the long-standing emphasis on preventing the birth of children with Down's syndrome, a disorder that is more financially costly to society—accounting for about 15 percent of the institutionalized mentally retarded population—than it is personally costly to its victims. (There are certainly other disorders and diseases that cause greater pain and discomfort.)

In the 1950s and 1960s, when studies seemed to indicate that more than half the children with Down's syndrome were born to mothers over the age of thirty-five, women over thirty-five were urged to have amniocentesis. When two decades of screening and abortion of Down's fetuses in this age group failed to have a significant impact on the national Down's syndrome population, new studies were undertaken. These revealed that only about 20 percent of Down's children are born to women over

thirty-five, and that in many cases (nearly a quarter, according to one study) the father may be the source of the extra chromosome that causes the disorder. By itself, then, amniocentesis of women over thirty-five would not do the trick. The discovery that Down's syndrome could also be detected by the AFP blood test, which is safe enough to be given to all pregnant women, was therefore regarded as a major breakthrough.

There has been no shortage of arguments to eliminate the ill or disabled before they become a financial burden to society. In a survey of British obstetricians in the late 1970s, researcher Wendy Farrant discovered that two-thirds of the respondents rated "savings in costs to society of caring for people with disabilities" as an important benefit of a national screening program for neural-tube defects; 13 percent agreed that "the state should not be expected to pay for the specialized care of a child with a severe handicap in cases where the parents had declined the offer of prenatal diagnosis of the handicap." More recently, the British Royal College of Physicians recommended a nationwide program of prenatal screening on the grounds that cost-benefit analysis showed that "it is cheaper to screen and counsel the whole population than it is to treat affected children who would otherwise be born to unprepared couples."

Medical cost-benefit analyses are startlingly cold-blooded. Studies feature graphs comparing the costs to society of a disabled child with the expense of testing and abortion. Articles debate the appropriate discount rate that should be used in calculating the lifetime costs to the state of caring for a disabled individual. One recent study, which noted the growing cost of providing services for mentally handicapped young adults, lamented the increase in the number of patients with Down's syndrome—an increase the authors attributed to medical advances that have allowed those with Down's to live longer and healthier lives. Debate has surfaced within the cystic fibrosis community over whether advances in the comfort and lifespan of individuals with CF outweigh earlier arguments favoring abortion of fetuses diagnosed with the disorder.

Crucial to all the discussions, reports, and studies supporting prenatal testing is the assumption that women will have abortions if fetal defects are detected. The hard truth is that there are still very few conditions that can be treated in utero. Hospitals will occasionally do fetal blood transfusions or perform surgery for urinary tract obstruction, and drug therapy is useful for treating some metabolic diseases. Experimental research in the area of gene therapy, the replacement or correction of a defective gene in the fetus, would open up the possibility of new forms of prenatal treatment. For the foreseeable future, however, the chief purpose of prenatal diagnosis is to

give parents the opportunity to abort a fetus diagnosed with a disorder. It is telling that research in the area of prenatal diagnosis is overwhelmingly concentrated on finding ways to diagnose conditions in the first few months of pregnancy, when abortion is a simpler and safer procedure, even though information about the fetus is much richer later on.

Yet the "A" word is almost never mentioned in the screening literature. When allusion to the subject is unavoidable, it is glossed over with an extraordinary amount of euphemism. This is the case even in medical journals, where doctors are addressing one another rather than pregnant patients. Physicians refer to "screening and its sequelae." Pregnancies are "terminated," "selectively terminated," or, most bewildering, "interrupted." Parents who receive news of a fetal disorder are urged to "choose a reproductive option," "decide the disposition of their pregnancy," or, simply, "intervene." In discussing abortion procedures, physicians refer to "permanent asystole" or "mechanical disruption of the fetus" rather than fetal death. The word "amniocentesis" often serves as a stand-in for testing-plus-abortion; one genetics textbook states, "If all mothers of thirty-five years and over had amniocentesis then this would reduce the incidence of chromosomal disease by 30 percent." Many British physicians take recourse in acronyms, referring simply to "TOP"—termination of pregnancy.

Much of this coyness can be explained by political expediency. A technical bulletin on screening issued by ACOG, a group that presumably would rather be identified with babies than abortion, never mentions the "A" word, but recommends that "supportive or therapeutic services appropriate to the decision should be made available." The report of the 1983 President's Commission on genetic screening is, for obvious political reasons, a masterpiece of double-speak. When the report discusses screening for Tay-Sachs disease, abortion is nowhere mentioned but everywhere between the lines. Prenatal testing of the fetus, says the report, "has provided carrier couples with an option that did not exist previously. In the past, couples who had a child with Tay-Sachs disease often found the 25 percent risk of having another affected child to be unacceptable, and decided therefore not to have any more children. Prenatal screening for Tay-Sachs has meant the continuation of countless pregnancies and the conception of hundreds of infants who would otherwise not have been born."

The Commission also refers to the inevitable tension between the "public health goals of reducing the incidence and impact of inherited disorders" and "the special place accorded to the right of individuals to obtain and use screening information as their personal values dictate, whether or not their decisions result in a *reduction in genetic disease*" (emphasis

added). The only occasions where the Commission report actually uses the term "abortion" is when it wishes to capitalize on its pejorative sense; in its discussion of sex selection, the report straightforwardly condemns the use of prenatal diagnosis "to abort a fetus of the unwanted sex."

While many pregnant women welcome the choices prenatal testing has given them, others are ambivalent, have misgivings, or have simply not given the matter much thought. Yet the pressures to be tested are powerful. The most obvious pressure comes from the context in which tests are offered. Studies show that even women who have reservations about screening find it difficult to decline tests when their obstetricians suggest them. In one survey, about a third of the women who had already agreed to be tested "had wondered if it was right to perform a kind of quality control of the fetus."

In the doctor's office and in the many popular books available on pregnancy and childbirth, there is an assumption that reasonable and enlightened women will naturally want to make use of new screening technologies. The 1983 President's Commission on genetic screening is typical in describing prenatal testing and carrier screening (the testing of couples before conception to determine whether they carry a genetic defect) as enhancing a woman's choices. "Genetic screening and counseling are medical procedures that may be chosen by an individual who desires information as an aid in making personal medical and reproductive choices," it says. "Professionals should generally promote and protect patient choices to undergo genetic screening and counseling. . . ."

Politicians and pollsters have long known that the words "information" and "choice" are powerful ones for Americans—especially for women. Barbara Katz Rothman, a sociologist at Baruch College in New York, has observed that we are raised to welcome all offers of both: "If there is information to be had, and decisions to be made, the value lies in actively seeking the information and consciously making the decision. To do otherwise is to 'let things happen to you,' not to 'take control of your life.'" Women who reject screening are regarded as "turning away from the value of choice, and even more profoundly, turning away from the value of information."

Doctors, however, don't have to live with the anxiety generated by testing and the gathering of information; patients do. Yet physicians and women's health advocates repeatedly insist that the best reason for women to undergo prenatal screening is for "the reassurance it almost always brings." This is a strange assertion. Certainly, worrying is a natural part of any pregnancy: Can my body do all the things necessary to carry the baby to term? Will the baby be healthy? Will I be a good parent? Such free-floating

concerns have always plagued women. But in the past few decades, the normal anxieties of pregnancy have been inflamed by a highly specific set of specters—specters prompted less by genuine health threats than by the promotion of certain tests.

Because there is a test for Down's syndrome, for example, women over the age of thirty have been bombarded with articles about the risks of having a child with Down's; many women can chant the statistics for each age category. To look at this situation from afar, one would assume that women today are at increased risk of giving birth to a child with Down's, or that Down's syndrome accounts for a majority of birth defects or, at least, a majority of cases of mental retardation. In fact, Down's syndrome accounts for only a fraction of all birth defects (including mild retardation) and only a quarter of the cases of serious retardation, which can be caused by a number of unpredictable genetic factors as well as trauma during the birth process. Similarly, the other chromosomal abnormalities, fetal infections, neural-tube defects, and blood and metabolic disorders that can currently be diagnosed before birth do not begin to exhaust the universe of possible defects.

Women have been trained to concentrate their anxieties on Down's syndrome for the simple reason that they are offered tests for it. But they are offered tests for Down's, not because the risk is personally high for them, but because the public health sector has a powerful interest in reducing the number of citizens who may end up requiring government support. Major research efforts have therefore been concentrated on screening for Down's, one of the few forms of mental retardation whose cause is known.

Displaced anxiety can lead to artificial peace of mind. In the current climate of testing it is all too easy for prospective parents to forget that illness can befall a baby at any time during pregnancy and delivery, or after birth, and that the majority of birth defects are undetectable and unpreventable. Yet, as obstetricians will be the first to admit, many women who receive a negative result on a prenatal test seem to feel that they are in the clear. This false sense of security can make an undiagnosed birth defect or subsequent childhood illness all the more difficult to handle.

Pressures to undergo testing are invariably followed by subtle pressures to abort in the event of a positive diagnosis. While prospective parents may have worked out what action they would take if the fetus is diagnosed with anencephaly or Down's syndrome, they may be unprepared for ambiguous diagnoses, or diagnoses of milder conditions. Most parents do not realize that one in a hundred amniocentesis procedures (and an even higher proportion of CVS tests) will yield a combination of normal and abnormal cells that make predictions of any kind very difficult. Nor do most parents consider the possi-

bility—present with any medical test—that test results may be switched or misinterpreted. And most parents are unfamiliar with conditions like sex-chromosome abnormalities, which are diagnosed in about one in 290 amniocenteses. Nearly all children born with a sex-chromosome abnormality will have a normal life span. Some may be infertile or require hormonal therapy; some may need special help with schooling or behavioral problems. (So, of course, may many “normal” children.) Yet in one study twenty-five out of forty fetuses so diagnosed were aborted.

Any momentous life change, whether desired or dreaded, seems overwhelming in the abstract. Yet most people do rise to these occasions. The incorporation of prenatal screening into childbearing, however, allows couples’ abstract fears and prejudices to override their natural instincts. Comparisons between the attitudes of parents contemplating having a disabled child with those who already have a child with a disability are revealing. Surveys of women undergoing amniocentesis have shown that 62 percent say they would abort for sex-chromosome abnormalities, and 57 percent for blindness or paralysis of the legs. Yet only 20 percent of parents who have children with cystic fibrosis would consider abortion for CF. Clearly, having a personal relationship with an afflicted individual can summon up a host of nurturing instincts that do not come into play in a theoretical deliberation. It is interesting to note that these same parents of children with CF would be far more willing to abort for disorders they had no personal experience with. A similar pattern has been reported in parents of children with Down’s syndrome.

The majority of genetic counselors on hand to advise parents during the testing process pride themselves on being “nondirective.” They see their goal as providing information and helping patients sort out their feelings. But Angus Clarke, a geneticist at the University of Wales College of Medicine, has become skeptical of such claims of neutrality. In an article examining the use of counseling in his field, he concluded that “an offer of prenatal diagnosis implies a recommendation to accept that offer, which in turn entails a tacit recommendation to terminate a pregnancy if it is found to show any abnormality. I believe that this sequence is present irrespective of the counselor’s wishes, thoughts, or feelings, because it arises from the social context rather than from the personalities involved. . . .”

Within the medical literature there is a clear assumption that counselors are there, in effect, to help patients through the difficult process of *agreeing* to be tested and *agreeing* to abort in the event of a diagnosed defect. A March of Dimes casebook on genetic counseling uses the phrase “nonroutine decision” to refer to a couple’s choice to continue a pregnancy after a diagnosis of fetal defect. A booklet Yale

University Medical School’s prenatal testing unit hands out to couples who have just received a positive diagnosis treats as inevitable the grief that will accompany the decision to abort a defective fetus—and, by implication, as inevitable the fact that parents *will* choose to abort. “How do we describe the decision to actively end a pregnancy that often has been so joyously anticipated?” The booklet implies that parents should shield themselves from those who will simply “make moral judgments” and carefully likens the mourning process following an abortion after prenatal diagnosis to the loss of a child through miscarriage or accidental death.

But the fact is that parents *are* responsible for bending the pregnancy, and their reactions to the decision, and to the abortion itself, are all the more intense for that. The medical community has only recently turned its attention to the emotional issues surrounding abortion in these circumstances, and the results suggest that the experience is more traumatic than had been expected—almost always more traumatic than abortion in the event of an unwanted pregnancy.

Studies comparing first-trimester abortion following CVS with second-trimester abortion after amniocentesis show similar levels of grief. But abortions after amniocentesis are more taxing physically and more grueling emotionally. Late-second-trimester abortions usually consist of an injection of prostaglandin into the amniotic sac, followed by labor that takes anywhere from several hours to more than twenty-four hours, culminating in delivery of the dead fetus. In an attempt to help parents come to terms with the loss, many hospitals encourage women to view or hold the fetus after delivery. A photo is often kept on file in case a woman who does not wish to see the fetus at the time of the abortion wishes to do so later on. A small number of women opt for a dilation and evacuation procedure, in which the fetus is surgically removed from the womb.

Researchers who have begun to study the reaction of parents who abort for fetal defect seem surprised at the extent of emotional distress. One group of researchers reached what one would have thought would be an obvious conclusion—that “for most women the event had the psychological meaning of the loss of a wanted child.” In one of the largest studies of what are called the “psychosocial sequelae” of abortion after prenatal diagnosis, these researchers interviewed eighty-four women and many of their husbands two years after the event. They learned that more than 20 percent of the women still experienced grief and guilt that “interfered with their mental well-being.” Some of the younger women in the group had been having recurring panic attacks and nightmares. One man had been impotent since the abortion. Ten couples had separated at some point

during the two years as a result of the stress the abortion placed on the relationship.

Nearly half the couples said that their behavior toward their children had become overprotective, anxious, or irritable. Two couples left their children for six months with relatives. Five men left the interview room "to hide their tears." And thirteen couples refused even to participate in the study because the subject was too painful for them to discuss. The researchers observed that 40 percent of the women and 9 percent of the men displayed a "loss of moral self-esteem produced by the awareness of their own contribution to the pregnancy loss." Although only 32 percent of the women practiced a religion, 82 percent "experienced a strong spiritual disturbance." The researchers speculated that "55 percent of the women and 58 percent of the men were potentially at risk of prolonged or unresolved grief because they felt unable to voice their feelings."

The survey concluded that, "while a second trimester termination of pregnancy for fetal abnormality may be physically relatively safe for the mother, it remains an emotionally traumatic, major life event for both father and mother." Yet the researchers who arrived at this conclusion did not reassess prenatal screening in light of their findings. Instead, they simply criticized the "post-termination care" the couples received, and urged that those who abort under such circumstances receive more counseling: "Grief cannot be prevented but may be shortened if couples are given the right tools, in the form of skilled preparatory counseling, to come to terms with it."

As prenatal screening becomes increasingly routine, disability ceases to be viewed as a random misfortune. But even if a woman had all the reproductive choices in the world—whether to conceive, whether to undergo diagnostic testing, whether to treat the fetus, or whether to abort for a particular condition—she still would not be guaranteed a healthy child. When children are born with disabilities or suffer injuries in childhood, will parents steeped in a culture of screening regard them with resentment? The effect of this culture, Barbara Rothman has pointed out, is that conditionality, rather than acceptance, is built into parental love from the start. Screening for defects is a way of saying: "These are my standards. If you meet these standards of acceptability, then you are mine and I will love and accept you totally. After you pass this test." Pediatrics expert Jeffrey Botkin agrees that screening may have a destructive effect on the parent-child relationship, noting that testing raises parents' expectations of their children, rather than encouraging parents to recognize the uniqueness of each child.

Disability advocates and feminists interested in the social impact of reproductive policies have criticized society's growing role in developing and enforcing

quality-of-life standards. Even some feminists who are resolutely pro-choice have trouble with abortion for defect. As Harvard's Ruth Hubbard has explained, "It is one thing to abort when we don't want to be pregnant and quite another to want a baby, but to decide to abort this particular fetus we are carrying in hopes of coming up with a 'better' one next time." Disability groups and feminist supporters fear that when physicians encourage the abortion of fetuses with diseases or disabilities, they are fostering intolerance of the less-than-perfect people who are already born. Anecdotal evidence gives cause for concern: in one study of seventy-three parents-to-be undergoing prenatal screening, 30 percent said they thought screening might encourage negative attitudes toward the disabled; half thought that mothers of disabled children would be blamed for their failure to undergo screening or have abortions.

Angus Clarke has remarked on the poisonous effect of the double standard that governs prenatal screening. Physicians and policymakers, he notes, assume that abortion for sex selection is "tantamount to a declaration that females are of much less social value than are males. Society is not willing to make such a statement, which would have profound implications for how women are viewed in society, and also for how women view themselves." Yet there are no restrictions on the patient's autonomy to abort for any disability whatsoever. This, Clarke says, indicates the "low value that our society places upon those with genetic disorders and handicaps. We draw some moral lines for social but none for genetic termination of pregnancy."

The President's Commission on genetic screening bears this out. While endorsing testing for disorders and defects, the commission roundly condemns sex selection on the grounds that it is "incompatible with the attitude of virtually unconditional acceptance that developmental psychologists have found to be essential to successful parenting. For the good of all children, society's efforts should go into promoting the acceptance of each individual—with his or her particular strengths and weaknesses—rather than reinforcing the negative attitudes that lead to rejection."

Other criticisms of prenatal testing stress the procedure's potential impact on the distribution of illness in society. The epidemiologist Abby Lippman has warned that since affluent people are more likely to avail themselves of testing and more likely to abort when presented with a positive or ambiguous diagnosis, the wealthier classes may be avoiding illnesses—such as Down's syndrome and spina bifida—that up until now have always been randomly distributed. This demographic shift may leave the disabled without the lobbying clout so crucial to obtaining funding for research and treatment.

As screening becomes increasingly widespread and sophisticated, physicians, policymakers, and the courts will be forced to make judgments about what kind of life is worth living and what kinds of disabilities are too costly to society. Already, parents who undergo prenatal testing are finding that answering life-and-death questions is more difficult than they had imagined. How “normal” does a baby have to be to continue the pregnancy? Which is worse, a severe physical or slight mental handicap? Should one abort if there is a 30 percent chance that a genetic disease will be transmitted? Is it worth giving birth to a child who will die at the age of forty? Thirty? Twenty?

Prenatal testing has the potential to raise countless uncharted dilemmas. If parents who choose to abort in the case of a detected defect already have children, how do they explain the sudden disappearance of the pregnancy? Do they tell the children it was a miscarriage, or do they try to explain that the pregnancy was ended because the baby had an illness? Other, more peculiar, situations present themselves when mild or ambiguous disorders are diagnosed and parents choose not to abort. In the case of conditions that may affect growth, sexual development, or level of aggression, Rothman has noted, parents might find themselves locked into a certain perception of their children, always on the lookout for signs of abnormality. Perfectly normal childhood behavior will be scrutinized for manifestations of certain diseases. There is no way to know how this atmosphere might affect a child’s development and sense of self. As the ability to detect a wider range of nonfatal genetic conditions becomes possible, these sorts of challenges may become increasingly common.

Rothman has also described the daunting problem posed by the detection of late-onset disorders, such as Huntington’s disease, that do not manifest themselves until adulthood. If parents know the awful

secret that their child probably will not live past a certain age, how will this knowledge affect their relationship with the child? Will they find themselves keeping an emotional distance to protect themselves from future pain? Will they, consciously or unconsciously, skimp on ways they invest in their child—whether in education or in encouragement of talents, hobbies, and other skills?

The decisions raised by prenatal testing are the stuff of moral philosophy. But they put real-life parents in inhumane situations. Moreover, they coarsen our very notions of what is involved in being a parent and what it means to be a responsible member of society. Through the gradual introduction of new forms of technology and testing, the medical establishment and the public health sector have been developing subtle quality-of-life standards and not-so-subtle ways of discouraging the birth of those who do not measure up. Debate on the issues raised by screening, when it does take place, has been confined to a small circle of professional ethicists, legal scholars, and feminists interested in reproductive policy.

Testing for birth defects, meanwhile, has crept into the life of nearly every woman of childbearing age, whether she avails herself of it or not. It is not too strong to say that childbearing has, in a profound sense, been transformed. This transformation is not the province of one interest group or another: it is not exclusively a medical issue, a legal issue, an economic issue, or a women’s issue. Like many revolutions in medicine and technology, prenatal testing took on a life of its own before its implications could be fully assessed. Like too many revolutions, its destructive social consequences may prove to be both far-reaching and long-lived. ^[ET]

Women, Ordination, and Angels

Michael Novak

When Dr. George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, visited Pope John Paul II in May 1992, the two church leaders discussed the probable future ordination of women priests in the Anglican Church. That, the Pope said, “touched on the very nature of the sacrament of holy orders.” A Vatican spokesman said later that “the Catholic Church, for fundamental theological reasons, does not believe it has the right to authorize such ordination.”

For fundamental theological reasons. One wonders what these reasons are. Apart from a splendid essay (“Priestesses in the Church?”) by C. S. Lewis, one scarcely ever encounters a *theological* argument against the proposition that women should be ordained priests. One hears about “tradition,” and about the “example” of Jesus Christ—these are solid reasons, but not wholly persuasive. The inquiring mind is restless until it comes to understand the theological reasons *why* Jesus did as He did, and why the tradition is as it is.

In advanced Western societies, the Catholic tradition of excluding women from the priesthood has come (quite suddenly) to seem *prima facie* unjust. This is doubtless because of the intellectual shift in our thinking from “natural law” to “natural rights.” In natural law thinking, natural differences between males and females (“natural” both in the biological-neurological and in the cultural-symbolic dimension) offered sufficient reason for accepting a differentiation of functions and roles. For centuries, the prevalence of organic, role-differentiated thinking allowed the traditional practice of excluding women from the priesthood to seem fitting and right. In the light of doctrines of “natural rights,” by contrast, according to which equal rights inhere in all persons *qua* persons, this exclusion has come to seem arbi-

trary, and in the end unjust.

There is, then, much more involved in the question of whether women can be priests than ecclesiastical practice. At stake is a profound transformation in the Catholic intellectual tradition, nothing less than a “transvaluation of values,” a fundamentally new and different arrangement of the intellectual field in which the concept of justice is located. In the tradition, justice is to be found in the field specified by, among other things, love, the sacramental order, the common good, communion, and justification by faith. In the projected new order, it is located in the field of affirmative action.

Obviously, profound implications for religion in society follow. If the Catholic tradition of selecting only males should be continued, the Catholic Church will seem to be at fundamental odds with the culture in which it is now implanted, and conversely, if women are admitted to the priesthood, the Catholic Church will have adapted itself to the practices of contemporary Western culture.

At certain times in history, fidelity to the true faith has required of the Church that it become a counterculture, a *scandalum*, to contemporary culture. At other times, adaptation to the existing culture has been both a sign and an instrument of a deeper penetration into the truth of the Gospels. Naturally such choices of direction have always carried weighty consequences.

At present, the arguments for and against ordaining women are formally unequal. The argument *for* women priests is clear, logical, well-stated, and in accord with at least certain contemporary Western sensibilities, whereas the argument for reserving the priesthood to males is still shrouded in tradition, accepted habits of thought, and instinct. For centuries—indeed until the last two decades—practically everyone, females and males alike, took the traditional position for granted, *understood* it

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preconsciously, accepted its plausibility, felt its legitimacy in their bones. The issue did not even arise, for example, at the Second Vatican Council (1961-65) or, barely so, in the century of theological research and *ressourcement* that preceded it.

We have nevertheless to consider that this long tradition might have been insufficiently developed and that, in the fullness of time, a true and wholly acceptable "development of doctrine" is now rising to the surface, revealing a dimension of Gospel truth to which our ancestors were blind. In many other matters there can be no doubt that the fullness of Catholic truth as it is understood and theologically articulated today goes far beyond the propositional clarity and articulation of Christians in earlier centuries. God does continue to lead and to guide His Church by the path of theological debate, reflection, and intellectual inquiry. He did so regarding various doctrines bearing on the role of one woman, the Mother of God, to name but one example, as in the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption.

And because the theological reasons for the reservation of the Catholic priesthood to males have lain dormant and unarticulated over many centuries, and those who disagree with the Church's tradition have been tempted to mock, simple filial piety would require them precisely to marshal the best possible argument on behalf of that tradition. They should do so in order to save the honor and authority of the Church by showing why what they no longer accept was for so long almost universally taken to be sensible. On the other hand, those who accept the present tradition of the Church as normative are required by a similar piety to give an account of their reasons for holding to so broadly unpopular a position.

Moreover, both those who accept and those who are led to reject the traditional teaching would surely benefit from weighing a fully articulated theological argument that puts into words what our predecessors in the faith found true in that teaching. It is after all essential for one who rejects to understand clearly what he is rejecting, with its whole range of intellectual consequences. For the Catholic faith is (even if its moral teaching is not) a "seamless garment." To grasp clearly the consequences of tearing a piece out of it is crucial for any who cherish its integrity. "Tradition is the democracy of the dead," Chesterton once wrote. We owe it to the faith of those who have handed it on to us to treat it justly, even though today we grope for contemporary words to express what our ancestors felt in their bones.

I

To begin with, one thing needs to be stipulated as certain: women have been great preachers of the Word; doctors of the Church; ministers to the poor, the sick, and the needy; high ecclesial authorities such as abbesses, foundresses, and leaders of world-

wide institutions; and exemplars of a Christlike way of life. In them, Christ has lived and moved and had his being. If the question is, "Can women be exemplary and saintly ministers of the Gospel?" the answer is unambiguously yes. We each know many women who can perform all the purely ministerial functions of the Gospel and the church community as well as, in many cases better than, males. Within the Catholic tradition itself, one thinks of St. Catherine of Siena, St. Teresa of Avila, and many others, preeminently the Mother of God herself, "Mediatrice of all Graces" as Catholics have long called her.

Outside the Catholic tradition, among those Christian communities that reject "priestcraft" and the liturgical, representative, mediating role of the Catholic priesthood, the question of women ministers has been, on the whole, easy to answer. No *theological* reason impeded them (or at least many of them) from including women as full-fledged ministers, although longstanding custom, habit, and tradition (in that sense) may have for a time led to hesitation. If such reasons of custom, habit, and "tradition" were for Catholics the only considerations, the question would be ultimately reducible to one of "the courage to change."

Again, since many contemporary peoples outside the advanced Western societies have in fact expressed serious cultural reasons for resisting such change, Catholic authority might for reasons of universal good order accede to their sensibilities rather than to those of the advanced Western cultures. But these also would ultimately be reasons of prudence, rather than of fundamental theology.

With C. S. Lewis, we must freely concede that God could have done things quite differently. We modern Westerners might surely have done things differently, and in a more "just" fashion than the tradition we are privileged to inherit. Certain reasons might even be adduced as to why we should from now on. The most extreme feminists have argued, for example, that the entire tradition of Christianity is patriarchal, and needs to be reformulated. The less extreme have merely argued that the Catholic tradition, like all things human, is flawed, and needs to be reformed so as to bring it closer to being the Kingdom of God on earth.

But this is precisely what is at issue: would the selection of women priests be a true—or false—development of doctrine? Moreover, the feminist argument here can be turned back on its makers, as Fr. Walter Ong, S.J., makes clear in his study of the masculine and feminine connotations of language, *Fighting for Life: Contest, Sexuality, and Consciousness*. There are profound "feminizing" tendencies in Christianity, he reminds us, so efficacious that in some cultures males are driven away from participation. The counterbalance to these feminizing tendencies is, Ong argues, a robust masculine symbolism at certain crucial points. This counterbalance is essential both

to Christian truth and to psychic equilibrium.

Some feminists further claim that they are made to "feel left out" by what they claim is the tradition's "noninclusive language." But as Paul Mankowski, S.J., has pointed out in the December 1992 issue of *Crisis*, that claim is based on an elemental linguistic error. That certain words have more than one sense, covering varying ranges of cases, is true of all languages and of the nature of language itself, if not, indeed, of the workings of the human mind. The Latin word *homo* may be used of a male alone (as in "Ecce homo") or by contrast in a way that includes *vir* (male), *mulier* (woman), *infans* (infant), *puer* (boy), and *puella* (girl). Intelligent people ought to be able to follow basic laws of language without artificial crutches, and to judge from context how broad a range of applications is intended, without turning linguistic somersaults.

Again, some who favor women's ordination do so on grounds of merit. Women, they rightly say, are at least as capable as, and many women are superior to, males in the qualities required of good priests. But it is simply bad theology to hold that the priesthood, a gift of God, is to be won by merit.

In a similar vein, others hold that it is *unjust* to bar women from ordination. Usually, those who offer this objection lay the blame for the injustice at the feet of "the male hierarchy" of the Church, particularly in "the all-male Vatican," rather than at the feet of God. But this is something of a screen. The question is whether the Church has the authority, the right, to break the pattern established by Christ, who called as His apostles neither the greatest and most capable of all Christians in the qualities necessary for the work of the priesthood, nor His Mother, nor any other of the wholly admirable saints and models among the women who accepted Him as their Lord and Savior.

One might, to be sure, initially sympathize with a woman for whom the constant reiteration of language about God only in masculine forms comes to seem a bit annoying, even distancing—especially in view of the way that everyday language, even in secular contexts, tends to lean on masculine forms when feminine forms would be at least as legitimate. This point gains further force from the observation that, after all, being Spirit, God has no gender and is properly spoken of neither as male nor as female. So why, it might be argued, when we have begun to be far more careful in secular language, should religious language about God be persistently masculine?

Two observations tell against this line of reasoning. First, the language of Scripture and Tradition (in the full, authoritative sense, as expressed for example in the canonical creeds) is quite pronounced in its selection of masculine forms for God. This suggests that God's self-revelation in history has been deliberate and remains significant. Second, there is an anomaly here. On the one hand, feminists wish to

assert that whether a priest is male or female makes no difference; gender is simply irrelevant. But if this is so, then no one should be bothered by the fact that priests are male; what matters is the priesthood, not the gender. Yet what is really determinative in the complaint about the tradition of male priests is that gender *does* make a difference, and that respect for the principle of equality demands *both* female and male priests. In logic, the principle of equality is inherently expansive: the demand for it cannot be met until the number of female priests is proportionate to the number of females in the believing community.

Yet these two principles—the interchangeability of gender in the priestly role and equal representation of the sexes—have no standing either in Scripture or in the Catholic tradition. There is no evidence that in His dealings with humans God acts by an egalitarian principle. Among all humans, He singled out the people of Israel. In every generation, He "elects" His own. God's choice has never been transparently based upon equal merit (or any merit at all). On the contrary, it induces to wonder and even fear; its workings are mysterious. If this is true of our salvation, why should it be surprising regarding the priesthood?

Again, one hears that Jesus chose only men as His Apostles in order not to shock the people of his time. Since He did not hesitate to shock them in many other matters—calling the bread of the last supper His body, for example—this explanation sounds more bourgeois than biblical. Jesus never shrank from shocking the conventional wisdom, priestly classes, customs, traditions, or even common sense of His time. If today it shocks our own generation of "enlightened" Westerners that Jesus did *not* choose women to become priests, why would He have been afraid to shock *His* generation by choosing women priests?

Nonetheless, a former U.S. Congressman, a wise leader and devout Catholic, said to me as he listened to my views, "Even if you are correct, what you say will not be credible. In a day when women fill every position held formerly by men, no one will accept the claim that women can't be priests. It's just not credible." The heart of the matter, then, is that the "advanced" culture of our age thinks of itself as normative.

The pressure of today's culture is immense, since many persons do not wish to sit still for theological argument. Nonetheless, the only serious question concerns fundamental theology, not the pressures of contemporary culture. Those who really believe that the Catholic tradition is not credible will find many available alternatives close at hand. If the Catholic Church abandons its tradition because of social pressure, and without sound theological reasons, why should it be credible at all? Would it not then simply show itself to be yet another human institution subject to human power and passively conforming to

the spirit of the age?

II

Thus there is no escaping the need for solid theological reasons; and so the first question that must be faced is the theology of the Catholic priesthood. To what extent is the Catholic priest *more* than a minister of the Gospel, a preacher of the Word, a minister to the poor and the weak and the vulnerable, and a leader of the local community at prayer?

The answer to this question has three parts. First, the Catholic priest has, in addition to these ministerial duties, a representative, liturgical role. In Catholic worship, the priest stands as a representative of Jesus Christ, head of the community and bridegroom of His bride, the Church. He stands as a representative figure in the ancient order of priests descending from Melchizedek. His being is ontologically marked with the priesthood forever. To be a priest is to be marked—chosen, gifted, indelibly altered—by God. This is the way in which the Catholic priesthood has been understood from the beginning.

By contrast, most of the other world religions, in Christ's time as in ours, have orders of the priesthood that include priestesses. Until now the Catholic Church, like Orthodox Judaism, has not. Why not? The fact is clear: the selected representative of the community for the worship-prayer of the people has been unmistakably and deliberately differentiated by gender. And the ground of this selection has been canonically and with all due solemnity codified as a gift given solely to (relatively few) males.

Second, the maleness of the priesthood is consistent with the metaphors of gender through which, predominantly, God has chosen to reveal Himself both in the Scriptures and in the long tradition of theological reflection. With respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, Jesus Christ spoke of Himself as the Son of God and taught us to pray "Our Father." He said that He was "sent by the Father," Who would afterwards send also "the Holy Spirit." Gender differentiation seems essential to the metaphor of the "generation" of the Persons of the Trinity. Poor as human metaphors must be when used of God, gender differentiation is clearly signaled in such frequently employed terms as "Father" and "Son." Are we to hold that such symbols have no significance in revealing the nature of God? That they are required merely for transient reasons?

Similarly, gender differentiation seems crucial to the Christmas story that reveals the mystery of God's becoming flesh, the Incarnation. One cannot easily imagine in the Christmas narrative the First Person of the Trinity being represented as "God the Mother," inseminated by a human male. It is mystery enough that a human female, Mary, "conceived of the Holy Spirit," one with the Father, should bear a human-divine Son. But in this case the humanness of the Son

is given concrete meaning. The Son of God is born from the womb of a human mother, nursed by her, brought up by her as other sons are brought up by their mothers. In this respect, the Catholic priest, male as he has always been, is an effortlessly symbolic representative of "the Son of God," bringing before His Father His bride, the Catholic people. Gender differentiation is essential to such a role, and the gender of the priest is symbolically consistent with that differentiation.

This is no conclusive argument, only an argument from what is "fitting." It does bring to light, though, why previous ages found the selection of the male so effortlessly plausible.

Finally, one can easily imagine that God in becoming "man" (in the gender-neutral term represented in the Nicene Creed's "*et homo factus est*") could have been sent as "the Only-begotten Daughter." But there seem also to have been weighty reasons why the Incarnation was not realized through a female Messiah but through a male. In becoming flesh, God could not simply appear as "a person." He had to accept the limits imposed by gender differentiation. He could have come in female flesh, as Daughter, but He did not; He chose to come in male flesh, as Son. To be sure, mystery surrounds this choice, as it does all human conceptions of and language about God's actions in history. This mystery offers fertile, and no doubt fruitful, grounds for wonder, awe, and meditation. But there can be no doubt about the *fact*. Christian faith was by God's deliberate will expressed in the language of gender differentiation and, specifically, in the self-revelation of God as Father and God as Son. Together with the Holy Spirit, these two are three-in-one, a communion of three distinct Persons.

The underlying point is that the selection of males for the priesthood underlines the importance God assigned in His self-revelation to gender differentiation, the rules of concrete flesh, and the conditions of human history. God, we are told, "humbled Himself, becoming man." He accepted the conditions of this, His concrete and much-loved creation. He *could* have come as Spirit, as an Angel summoning legions of angels to His side. He could have overawed humanity by coming in irresistible power, splendor, and majesty. Instead, He "became one of us." This entailed assuming human flesh, with all its differentiation and limits—in short, it entailed a choice between becoming male or female. There was no halfway position.

In sum, the Catholic priest is a representative figure selected according to the conditions of embodied, enfleshed persons in concrete human history. The choice was made from all eternity. The selection of males alone as Catholic priests is a sign (a sacrament, bearing grace) of several important revelations about God: about the Trinity, about the Incarnation, about the relation of Christ and His people, and

about the importance of gender differentiation.

"If men were angels," James Madison once wrote, "no government would be necessary." If men were angels, priests would not need to be (even could not be) males. But under the conditions of human flesh and actual history, it is a more accurate sign of the interior life of the Trinity, of the Incarnation, and of the relation of Christ to His people if the priest is clearly differentiated and selected as a male rather than as a female. Matter is the principle of individuation, and an emphasis on flesh safeguards respect for human individuality, even as it differentiates humans from angels. The priest is male because gender differentiation is significant to the self-revelation of God in history.

III

In order for us to come to know God, we must go by the path of our own being and knowing. We do not see God. Our knowledge of Him is dark and indirect, even when we accept His Word in Christ. It is knowledge by faith, not by direct vision. Thus, we have to grope our way toward things we cannot see, aware that we see "as in a glass darkly."

Let us, then, by a leap of imagination, put ourselves in the place of God *before* He had created humans. He did not have to make us sexed. God has no sex. Neither, as we said, do angels. Us He made into two distinct sexes. In this sense, God knew "in advance" that He would send His Son to redeem us, as one of us, embodied in male flesh. God had sexual differentiation in His mind at the very foundation of the history of salvation. "Male and female He made them," it says right at the head of the Book. To redeem us, He would send His only-begotten Son, born of a woman, Mary, and this Son would teach humans to pray "Our Father." Thus sex differentiation is not simply a trivial detail, to be discarded or altered without concern for consequences; it is essential to the story of human salvation. Fundamental. Foundational.

Moreover, the two sexes cannot be reversed without entirely altering the story of salvation. The conception of the Savior could not have happened by the instrumentality of a divine mother. To grasp that much requires no special gift for narrative. One cannot picture a human father (Joseph) conceiving the Man-God by a divine mother. Does the infant just suddenly appear in the straw? In what way is it human? In the story of Bethlehem, the humanity of Jesus is vitiated if Joseph is imagined to be the generator and God the mother. (Besides, Christianity without Mary would have had an impoverished history, so much so that apart from her its narrative is virtually inconceivable.)

Hypothetically, of course, one can easily imagine that in sending us a Savior, God could have had Mary bear a daughter. The Messiah could have been a woman. Why not? Joan of Arc captured the imagi-

nation not only of France but of the world. But then, *sed contra*, a woman Messiah preaching meekness and peaceableness would have sounded no new note. The long vulnerability of woman in pregnancy and childbearing, as well as a neurological difference in hormonal aggression, would have made such a claim seem but ordinary, self-serving, and typical of women. Thus, such a Messiah would not have launched any "transvaluation of values." Such a Messiah would have demanded, in effect, that in order to become Christians, males had to become like females.

By contrast, it was, and is, far more startling for a male Messiah to challenge the warrior-male and to insinuate such ideas as gentleness, compassion, and peace into the cultural patrimony of males. Males today would behave quite differently had they not been tutored for nineteen centuries by the image of the gentle, suffering Man-God. A religion whose Messiah was female would have nourished a culture far different from that of the Christian cultures we have known. That it would have been a better culture, with a more powerful impact on males, is, to say the least, not obvious.

Some might object that a culture whose God taught humans to pray the "Our Mother," and whose Messiah appeared as a daughter rather than as a son, would be a kinder, gentler religion than Christianity has been. Maybe. But it is at least odd that some of the feminists who make that case at the same time have recourse to the imaginary history of a matriarchal era during which women were warriors, fiercer than males. Others wish to hold the contradictory proposition that to ascribe characteristics such as "warlike" or "gentle" to either sex is without foundation. However one wishes to describe the demeanor of women in the realm of history and culture, it is futile to deny that since time immemorial males prided themselves on being warriors and conquerors. Among almost all the peoples that Christianity first reached, women were treated as handmaidens, servants, and even, in some cases, slaves.

The impact of Christian belief and sacramental practice on such peoples, working slowly like yeast in dough, was both to ennoble the female to equal status before God and to gentle the male. For just such reasons, some anti-Christians slandered Christianity as "a religion for slaves," "effeminate," and "emasculating." Later writers as diverse as "the genealogist" Friedrich Nietzsche and the devout Catholic Alessandro Manzoni wrote that the effect of Christianity on the Roman legionaries was to "feminize" them. Benito Mussolini proscribed the second-person feminine usage *lei*, which he interpreted as an anti-fascist sign of effeminacy, and insisted on *voi* as the fascist, manly usage. (Thus the simple locution *lei* became an act of political protest.) Moreover, the culture of fascism explicitly mocked the "effeminacy"

of the West, which it attributed to Christian influence. It aimed to restore the hard, pitiless, and willful “masculine” spirit of the pre-Christian warrior peoples of Europe. In fascism, the world saw a return to the ideal of the male without the gentleness taught by Jesus Christ.

Such reflections give one pause before the story of sex differentiation in the unfolding of modernity. The role of the God-Man, the male Messiah, is pivotal in that transvaluation. Henry Adams in *The Virgin and the Dynamo* explores this process by means of sustained reflection on the impact of Mary, the Mother of God, on the Western imagination—Catholic as distinct from Protestant. Denis de Rougemont in *Love in the Western World* and C. S. Lewis in *The Allegory of Love* have described the cultural transformation evoked in the West by the myth of romantic love and the change in male-female relations that it wrought—compared to which, Lewis writes, the Protestant Reformation was as a ripple in the ocean.

The cultural significance of sexual differentiation is vastly deeper than our present generation of feminists has yet to imagine. One tampers with matters of such profundity at civilization’s peril. If someone had predicted, for example, that following the advent of feminist practices and standards in American society, violence, especially among males, would by no means decrease, that person would have been correct.

Indeed, to bring theological reflection to bear on the role of sex differentiation in transforming pagan into Christian cultures (and back again) would require an immense work now barely begun. One would have to examine rigorously and in detail the mythology of male and female implicit in radical feminist writers. The widely accepted notion today that any position of responsibility or field of action open to males is also by right and justice to be open to females might at first seem highly plausible. And yet such a notion ultimately rests on rejecting the transvaluation effected by the Christian faith.

For it was Christian faith that first taught the male warrior a code of courtesy, compassion, and charity, whose first expression was Christian chivalry, whose later expression was the ideal of the Christian gentleman, and whose underlying ideal has been the equality of women and men in baptism, in faith, and in the promises of God. The Christian ideal of equality before God not only did not erase sexual differentiation, but, on the contrary, rested upon that reality as its foundation.

Before God, there is neither male nor female, yet male and female for His inscrutable and unchangeable purposes He made them. And through this separation of the sexes He parted the veils of mystery that necessarily mask His essence, in order to offer us such insight into His inner life as He thought would best serve us: that we should pray to Him as “Our Father,”

and receive His Son into our mouths and hearts and minds, and worship Him as “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” three-in-one.

Made in His image as we are, it is through our complementarity as male and female that we piece together such fragments of His reality as we are vouchsafed to come to know. Christian marriage itself, mirrored in the liturgical worship of His people, gives witness to the intimate and profound role of sexual differentiation in our knowledge of, and union with, God. A male and a female, united through the sacrament of marriage with the Triune God, embody a human communion of persons mirroring the divine.

One cannot, in short, yank the thread of sexual differentiation from the Christian faith without unraveling the whole. A weakening of the integrity of the mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Church, Christian marriage and family life, and much else besides, must inevitably follow.

IV

Theologically, one of the most difficult of insights necessary for those aspiring to be Christians concerns the difference between Christianity and spiritual religion. Converted at first from the worldly experience of carnal pleasures and material interests, the newly aspiring Christian faces an almost insuperable temptation to imagine that to be a Christian is to reject both the things of this world and the temptations of the flesh in order to flee to the things of the spirit. Here the aspiring Christian is on treacherous ground.

For to be converted from this world and the flesh is not yet to find God; there remains a third temptation, that of the “pride of spirit.” Indeed, the angels themselves, being neither of this world nor of the flesh, are according to the Scriptures submitted to this formidable third test—as are all the saints. Being “beyond” the flesh and the attractions of this world, the person to be tried in this way imagines himself, or herself, to be standing in a purer realm. Being neither male nor female, he or she rejoices in the potency of unencumbered intellect and will, the power of being pure spirit. Here there are no embodied, sexually differentiated persons, only agents of pure understanding and pure willing. All is calm. All is serene. One has only to will and it is done. Here there is no recalcitrance of history, no hazard of contingency or accident, no weakness of the flesh nor torpor of the body. She (or he) gains self-esteem by defining her being by her willing. “I will, therefore I am.” Here many of the mighty fall.

Humans too are susceptible to this temptation of the spirit. A common name for it, noted above, is “pride of spirit,” but the underlying form of the disease, among humans, has sometimes been called “angelism” by theologians, and “gnosticism” by historians. The essence of angelism is to shuck off

from one's self-understanding the reality of embodiment in the flesh, so as to imagine oneself a pure spirit, neither male nor female, without carnal appendages, desires, or limitations. "What the will desires, the will desires," Woody Allen would have said, had Woody Allen been an angel without a carnal heart. Unmoved by temptations of the flesh, such a strong spirit would rejoice in the power of the pure will. In addition, angelism entails pride in a raised consciousness, beyond the mere habits, customs, and common sense of the less sophisticated. Angelism, or gnosticism, is the realm of the disembodied person of raised consciousness and unresisted will.

For human beings, of course, angelism is a realm only of pretense and self-delusion. Moreover, those "angelists" (or "personists") who imagine that the stage of consciousness in which they dwell is higher, more enlightened, more just and more spiritual than that of historical Christianity, which in their view has some catching up to do, have not yet grasped one fundamental premise of Christianity. To put the point another way: they have not yet overcome one stumbling block, one *scandalum*. They do not see that Christianity is a sacramental religion, that is, a religion of the flesh.

Immemorially, it is true, Christian pastors have spoken of "the salvation of souls," but that was only shorthand for saying that they are working *sub specie aeternitatis*, in the light of eternity, and not by the standards of this world. And in the light of eternity, Christianity promises the resurrection of the body. (In this sense, there *will* be, in the Kingdom of Heaven, male and female, fired alike by the love and light of God.) Each of the Christian sacraments addresses the body as much as the soul: cool water on the head of the baptized; oils for the ill; the appearances of bread and wine in the eating and drinking of the Eucharist; human words and signs of absolution in penance; chrism and (once upon a time) a slap on the cheek at confirmation; the laying on of hands at ordination; and both stated vows and the consummated union of lovemaking in holy matrimony. Christianity is a religion neither for angels nor for disembodied persons. It is a religion for males and for females, for embodied persons, for creatures of body and spirit, for waist-expanding and graying (or balding) seekers after truth and love and God, such as we.

The Christian sacraments, for example, are not valid unless *both* form and matter are present as prescribed. The tendency to spiritualize Christianity is nonetheless pervasive—to make it like so many other religions, to attune it to the angelism that in every generation attracts so many of the most intelligent and sensitive souls. In opposition to those who would wish a purely spiritual religion, G. K. Chesterton once defined Catholicism in shocking terms resonant with the sacramental sense of God's presence in

His creation: Catholicism, the very fleshly G. K. said, is a thick steak, a glass of stout, and a good cigar.

A religion committed to the flesh is at least as lowly as a smoked cigar. It is for commoners as much as (even more than) aristocrats and is also, alas, irremediably vulgar. Catholicism sometimes seems positively weighted down by the flesh, as on a too-hot day, beneath the droning of a too-poor sermon, in a too-crowded church filled with listless, distracted, bored fellow participants. Weary with having tried to make things constantly better, experienced Catholics have learned to employ such experiences as epiphanies of grace, like the sacraments themselves, reflecting that here too Christ is present, emptying himself, making himself disponible, redeeming our heavy humanity. At the heart of Christianity lie the sinner and the humdrum mediocrity of daily life. The neighbor we are called upon to love is not the rosy abstraction, humankind, but exactly those neighbors who get on our nerves—and indeed precisely when they do so. Christianity is not a religion of escape. It commands the acceptance of the banal, the boring, and the repetitive—on the grounds that these especially are vehicles of grace, even though often disdained and contemned as was the Messiah in Isaiah 53. These especially are as surely the bearers of the life of grace as are, for the human body, the repetitive beating of the human heart and the steady circulation of the blood. Such boring realities are always undervalued until their rhythms threaten to come to a halt—when suddenly we glimpse how precious they are, and how miraculous each strong, steady beat of the weakening heart actually is.

Because it is a religion of the flesh, Catholicism sees signs of the Creator in all the things He has created. Like a lover, one sees bursts of His glory in the morning sun and the crisp air, in the bellowing fury of a storm and in a caterpillar hunching himself on his slow course up the length of a bending leaf. Each angle and idiosyncrasy of concrete things is like a mystery to be read and wondered at. Why are there caterpillars? Why so many species of indescribably poignant roses? Why is there anything at all?

It is in this same sacramental vein that the experienced Catholic contemplates the mystery of the priesthood. If you do not see the priesthood as a mystery, you do not understand. The most wonderful miracle in the world occurs at the priest's canonical bidding: The Son of Man, who already did a wondrous deed in assuming male flesh, now becomes again male flesh and blood under the appearances of bread and wine. The humility of God, and His love for our presence, surpasses understanding. That is the true mystery, of which the role of the priest is but an instrumental and sacramental part. To the extent that we hunger for the Eucharist, food for the soul as for body, we honor the priest as its bearer. Vessel of clay, yet vessel carrying God to us.

Why is the priest male? It figures. It fits. The priest's maleness is a reminder of the central role played in our salvation by the sacramentality of human flesh—not flesh-in-general, but male flesh. "This is my body," he says in the place of Christ, the male Christ. "This is my blood." It is not an angel we eat and drink, not spirit, not a (disembodied) person: but the male Christ, body and soul, human and divine person.

The priest's maleness reminds us with Nicea: "*Credo in unum Deum, PATREM omnipotentem. . .*" We believe in the Father almighty, and in Jesus Christ His only Son, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit by the Virgin Mary, "*et homo factus est.*" The Word was made flesh, *caro* (John 1:14)—not "person," not hermaphrodite, and not female, but male. But, a feminist might object, "By the same logic, Jesus was a carpenter and a Jew, and that does not mean that all priests must be carpenters and Jews." Except, of course, that it is *not* the same logic. For an embodied person, being either male or female is of the essence of being human; whereas to be Jewish or Irish, carpenter or professor of logic, is only an accident of culture and circumstance. That the priest be male is fitting to the essence of Jesus, a divine Person embodied as a male, a fully human male. One can "see Christ" in every human being, male or female, but a female cannot represent the male Christ before the community. Not, at least, without jangling symbols beyond their meaning, without communicating something essentially different.

In order to believe that Catholic priests may also be female, one has to believe that sexual differentiation does not illuminate the self-revelation of God in the doctrines of the Trinity; the Incarnation; the shocking transvaluation of sex roles in the moral teaching of Jesus; the spousal relation between Christ and his people; the precisely detailed emphasis of Christianity on the real flesh (including the resurrection of the flesh); its opposition to angelism under all its forms; and the exact complementarity (not interchangeability) of male and female in the mystery of God's self-communion in matrimony.

The institution of female priestesses would reverberate off-key through most of the major symbols of God's self-revelation. The beautifully wrought sexual differentiation of the narrative of Christian faith will have buckled. And its collapse will have cracked every arch in its theological architecture.

In order to believe that Catholic priests may also be female, one has to believe, further, that the traditional

hierarchy of the Church is not now a sacramental sign of God's commitment to this people until the last day but, rather, an unfaithful bearer of errant patriarchy, sexism, and injustice. One has to believe in some ideal Church of the future, separate from the "oppressive" Church against which feminists rage. One has to reject the real, concrete Church of today as sacrament, and to cast it aside as a source of injustice and alienation, an obstacle to God's grace and an abomination. One has to see in the Vicar of Christ, stubbornly insisting on fidelity to God's word, not the presence of Christ but the disfigurement of Christ. Indeed, one has to see in his claim that maleness is essential to the validity of orders an impediment to the true sacrament. One has to believe that in the *matter* of the sacrament of orders, maleness in the subject signifies nothing of essential importance, and femaleness in the subject alters no sign essential to the faith.

One also has to believe that in the authentic *form* of the sacrament the intention of Christ, of the orthodox tradition, and of the Church is now to select females as well as males, and that this selection will have no bearing on the cultural significance of any other Christian teaching.

It is entirely possible that there might somewhere be a lovely, haunting religion worshipping a Goddess, cherishing a female messiah, and liturgically represented by priestesses. But whatever such a religion might be, it will not be Christianity.

V

To be sure, Christianity is a many-splendored robe. As of November 1992, twelve of the twenty-eight churches in the Anglican communion have begun ordaining women priests and, in some cases, consecrating women bishops. The cultural logic of this choice has not yet been played out. Its full symbolic implications for key symbols of the faith might take four or five generations to reveal themselves completely. For a century or two, the church as a whole might wisely elect to watch and see, and to judge the new practice by its fruits.

Individuals, of course, have no such horizon. Since each life is short, we must each entrust our eternal salvation to one choice or the other, without being able to see the end of the tale. Down one path, orthodox teachings seem coherent, down the other, a great deal seems up for grabs. That things will go worse in the feminist churches is a wager, I think, with odds higher than Pascal's. ^[E]

The Case for Discrimination

Graeme Hunter

Half a century ago the word “discrimination” had already among its meanings the making of adverse distinctions with respect to persons. Today, following some fifty years of incessant attention to discrimination in that sense, it hardly supports any other. Such things happen to words, of course. What fastidious clergyman today would think of using the word “awesome” to evoke the majesty of God? What poet would claim that daffodils had made him gay? But more has happened to “discrimination” than just being smeared with the ink of journalism and selective usage. It has not merely suffered by having all its meanings crammed into one. To make adverse distinctions, i.e., to discriminate, especially regarding persons, has also passed from a neutral to an invariably negative sense. It has come to imply conduct of which one should be ashamed, moral wrongdoing, unwarranted action, such that to say “He discriminated wrongly against so-and-so” sounds tautologous, like “He murdered so-and-so, which was not right” or “So-and-so was inappropriately raped.”

When word-meanings are diminished, speakers of the language are affected in several regrettable ways. A good expression lost makes it more difficult to think of the concept it used to convey. And the entire process of communication, fallible at the best of times, becomes still more precarious. Will the words you select, even if you choose them carefully, convey the message you intend to those who are not so scrupulous? Loss of meanings even can be said to flatten the general appreciation of our world, when words are not there to define and hallow its contours.

Some there are, of course, who profit by verbal obfuscation, indeed strive to bring it about. Advertisers are not displeased if the public thinks of vacuum cleaners as Hoovers or paper tissues as Kleenex. And demagogues frequently believe in the premise of

Newspeak, namely, that to control language is to control thought, and they dream of limiting speech and thinking to a rude little lexicon of politically correct grunts, just enough for efficient exploitation of those they rule. But when left to itself the evolution of word meanings is an occult, unpredictable, and unfathomable process.

The career of *discrimination* falls somewhere in the middle: its evolution is neither entirely contrived nor wholly spontaneous. The topic that demanded and received the attention of the West after the Second World War was the atrocities of Nazi Germany. In order to make it difficult for anything like them to recur, measures were taken to prevent discrimination (in our imploded sense) against Jews. The repugnant facts, the attendant moral imperative to address them, combined with unrelenting publicity during the period of war trials (88,000 in Germany alone prior to 1966) drove the word “discrimination” deeper and deeper into the rut of synonymy with “invidious differentiation.” Once the semantic ground was so prepared, new discriminations of that type became easier to identify. As a result, the mass movements of American blacks and Indians became possible. So also, in decreasing order of plausibility, each a caricature of its predecessors, feminists, militant homosexuals, and a seemingly endless chain gang of “victims” have trudged noisily into our consciousness, for the most part uttering groans quite incommensurable with their burdens. It is no wonder that the pejorative sense of “discrimination,” by dint of so much incantation, has conquered the semantic field.

It is one thing to understand the circumstances that shrink the meaning of this word, another to understand the word itself. By etymology, discrimination is a close relative of discernment—(*crimen* being derived from *cerno*). Both involve therefore the neutral skill of grasping differences. Discernment,

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however, has come to mean grasping the good of something, and is therefore itself almost always meant positively, while discrimination has followed the unfortunate downward career described above. If restored to its proper sense, the word would connote the skill of grasping differences. Warranted discrimination would then mean grasping differences when it is appropriate to do so.

When would that be? To that difficult question I shall devote the rest of my observations, though confining myself to warranted discrimination within the setting of the university and particularly of my own specialty—philosophy.

I have before me as I write the notice of a recent publication of the Indiana University Press, edited by D. W. Curtin and H. Heldke, titled *Cooking, Eating, Thinking* and subtitled “Transformative Philosophies of Food.” Everything about it resembles a notice of a philosophical book. The blurb justifies its publication, makes it appear to satisfy a need, chides philosophy for having so long ignored this vital area of research, and draws it to the attention of philosophers and the adepts of feminism and environmental ethics. Everything, then, is made to look as if this were a real book on a real topic. From here, the charade is bound to continue. One or two people who pretend to be professors of philosophy will make the book mandatory reading for what pretend to be philosophy courses, and people who pretend to be students will pretend to discuss it. And the universities to which they belong will pretend that none of it is pretense.

Is there no one who can grasp the difference between works like *Cooking, Eating, Thinking* and serious scholarly inquiry? Of course there is. But the pretense is kept up because grasping such a thing would be an act of discrimination, and discrimination, in contemporary usage, is evil. And so these abominations swell to the hundreds and the thousands, fill up bookstores and libraries and courses and, in time, we get women’s studies, black studies, semiotics, deconstruction, in wave after indiscriminating wave, not only not challenging but closing the minds of our students, as Allan Bloom nicely put it in his most famous book.

You might say that people who choose to study such things get what they deserve. “What about the content of serious courses in serious disciplines? It can’t all be thinking about eating!” That is true, but consider another ill-starred travesty closer to philosophy’s core. In the early eighties, after the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, the report of an American task force on education, universities began to worry that they might not be able to go on graduating illiterate students forever and face no consequences for their reputation. The business world demanded that graduation from college entail at least having some rudimentary knowledge and some minimal competence.

On the other hand, government at all levels demanded that a university education be accessible to all, including the incompetent and those incapable of acquiring knowledge. Undiscriminating administrators said yes to both demands, graciously overlooking their incompatibility, and in many universities (my own being one), prescribed as remedy an obligatory course deceptively titled “Critical Thinking.” Here, in two hours a week over two semesters, everything from congenital idiocy to the waste and error of the first eighteen years of life is simultaneously overcome and rectified. Students, many of whom have hitherto held no genuine book in their hands, are taught to be discerning and critical readers. Those who never before have noticed that language can be used with demonstrative intent are made capable of lucid, cogent argument. Or so we pretend.

But if, in such courses, you try to teach logic, the bare bones of critical thinking, or try to teach by example from classic paradigms of compelling argument, you will find that a certain portion of your students think it “a crudey coarse,” as one of mine devastatingly put it. Some faculty members therefore become chastened realists. They decide that if they could only bring the students up to the level where they could have a critical understanding of the editorials in middlebrow newspapers, they would accomplish more than could reasonably have been expected. The same group of students finds this “interesting, but real hard.” Nevertheless my colleagues and I, whatever our pedagogical decisions, all pretend that we are teaching the same thing; we pretend that all our students are teachable; we pretend to be able to pass most of them; and we pretend not to be pretending all these things.

In many universities the demand is also made that every course have some feminist or some non-Western content or both. Some go so far as to demand that every newly engaged professor be able to teach his subject from a feminist point of view. In philosophy departments, as in others, this is greeted with everything from enthusiasm to lukewarm acceptance; rarely is it opposed. Never does it receive the hoots of disbelieving ridicule it deserves. But why? Does anyone seriously think that there is an alternative body of philosophers of the stature of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Leibniz, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Wittgenstein, or Heidegger worthy to displace them from the curriculum? Does anyone seriously propose that there is a feminine point of view different from the schools of thought associated with many of these great names, and so far above them as alone to be obligatory for all? “Not to replace them, but to join them,” some conciliatory feminist might say. But given the finite number of courses and years at the students’ disposal, to “join” is, in effect, to displace. And if the alternative curricula are to bring about such displacements, they need to

have some reason for doing so. Such a reason has not yet been produced, at least with respect to the pretensions of feminism, by any serious historian of philosophy.

Non-Western thought is a different case. There is undeniably a worthy philosophical tradition, for example, both in India and in China. And there are Sinologists and Sanskritists able to teach it. But few are their students. The Western enthusiasts of the East are seldom seen beginning, almost never seen to complete, the many years of Sanskrit or Chinese and the decades of anthropological acculturation necessary to become functionally bicultural. Nor could they do it without a firm grounding in their own culture. Nor, finally, should they do it without a calling. In any case, such a study is certainly unnecessary for the sake of an education. Just as Matthew Arnold observed that the workman who cannot get an education from Shakespeare and the Bible will not get one from Homer and Plato either, so it is all the more true that the student who cannot master his own tradition and its family of languages and literatures will surely be incapable of mastering one that is radically foreign.

So why do we greet with enthusiasm programs that are either too hard to implement, or without merit, or both? It is because we are afraid of discriminating. And perhaps, given our lack of practice, we are increasingly incapable of doing so. Yet if anyone is to get an education this is precisely what needs to change.

Dieticians discriminate. They recommend meals containing fruit, vegetables, and meat. Nothing, of course, prevents someone from insisting that gravel, twigs, and hair are just as good. But the latter diet will not be without consequences to health. Similarly, conventional reading lists of traditional subjects in universities were also discriminatory; they consisted of those things thought to build and exercise strong and educated minds. To ignore them will just as indisputably have consequences. There is no denying that we *could* be wrong about Aristotle—just as we could be wrong about meat. Both have been challenged. But the point about Aristotle is that he was put on reading lists by discriminating people and he should only be removed by still more discriminating ones. It is not some notion that every intellectual diet is equal to every other that could ever justify an alternative to Aristotle. Only the discovery of something better—if such could ever be found—will do that.

These anecdotal reflections suggest that there are two things in need of reform: the curriculum and the admissions policy. In both there must be discrimination. The two go hand in hand. I was told recently of an Ontario law school that, in a flourish of good will towards designated victim groups, pledged no longer to discriminate against the mentally handicapped. Though my informant saw little evidence of past

discrimination in this regard, he supposed, reasonably enough, that this new policy would herald some further dilution of the curriculum, students and requirements continuing to regress in harmony.

If there is to be education, we must begin with some native ability and build upon it. Only discrimination in admissions will produce the student material; warranted discrimination in curriculum will then challenge the students produced. This is not a matter of singling out the mentally inferior for punishment, but singling out the mentally able for cultivation of their talents. To say that universities ought to discriminate in favor of the clever is not to imply that those who are not clever ought to be forgotten, any more than to ask track teams to discriminate in favor of the swift is to suggest that we gas the slow. It is rather to counsel ourselves, while there is still time, in the fine words of Michael Oakeshott, to “remember who we are: inhabitants of a place of liberal learning.”

For Oakeshott, a university is a classically appointed room echoing with the conversation of mankind—a fallible, flickering, but still faithful inquiry into everything that matters, handed down as a craft from times past. It is easily occulted by war, fashion, loudly proclaimed certainties, yet is patiently taken up again in the cool of the day by those with inclination and ability.

We are, as he stresses, heirs to an institution we found but did not make. Yet it also has another dimension, on which Oakeshott does not dwell. To illustrate, let me take an example of an older but very small Canadian college—Bishop's University in Lennoxville, Quebec. It was founded in 1846 to bring the great institution of liberal learning into what were then the wilds of Lower Canada. If recent developments in universities had been, by and large, improvements, we might expect something very crude by contemporary standards in this pioneer college. Here, instead, is what the *Rules, Orders, and Regulations*, published in 1849, required of undergraduates:

The ordinary course of study at Bishop's College will extend over a space of four years. The subjects taught will consist of Classical and English Literature and Composition, History, Mathematics, Natural and Experimental Philosophy, Chemistry, Logic, Rhetoric, Moral Philosophy, Hebrew, and Divinity.

There are few serious academics under fifty who would not eagerly exchange their own undergraduate education, wherever obtained, for an educational experience like that.

Careful study and reflection on that curriculum, moreover, will reveal that it is designed to produce not simply a haphazard heap of expertise, but to

cultivate a certain unified vision of the world, a Christian catholic (in the nondenominational sense) outlook. This is made explicit in the Convocation address of the then-principal of the University, Jasper Nicolls, in 1860:

It is the business of a University to gather into itself all the branches of learning, to adopt and interweave with the old and well-tried, what is new and modern; to assist in its measure, and according to its capability in the work of scientific discovery, but far more to sanctify scientific discovery. When man searches and investigates, argues and proves, pronounces at his study-table that this or that field or rock produces or does not produce a certain precious metal, or indicates by calculations the existence of some hitherto undiscovered heavenly body, and points out the very spot it occupies at the moment; when the human mind thus strides onwards, let it be the University's privilege to demonstrate that the excellency of all this is not of man, but of God; that while man discovers, he discovers what God has made, what God gives him to understand. Universities let us remember are Christian Institutions.

I choose Bishop's University, not because it is extraordinary among universities of its age, but because it is not, and therefore stands as evidence of our forefathers' aspirations. Nine years later, in 1869, the much older and more prestigious university community of Harvard was exhorted by its new president, Charles William Eliot, in these terms:

We should all labor together to make Harvard a noble University—a seat of learning which shall attract the best teachers and most ardent students—a University which shall retain all the good of the past, and go forward to welcome the advancing light of the future. So may the priceless gift of our fathers be transmitted to our children, not only unimpaired, but constantly renewed and bettered. Let each generation do its part to make it more worthy of this great country, this advancing civilization, this ripening age. In the largest sense, let it be devoted to Christ, the great teacher of truth, and to his Church, the great means of human education.

Nicolls and Eliot in their day, like Michael Oakeshott in ours, counsel us to remember who we are, heirs of a liberal, but also of a Christian, tradition. And to remember is to be prepared to discriminate in our favor, as we attempt to uphold and be worthy of that tradition.

Of course the cries of bigotry, of narrowness, of anachronism will be raised on all sides, as the spleen

of our age pours into well-worn channels. But could it reasonably be denied that Christian catholicity, any less than liberal education, was among the fundamental treasures that it was the purpose of a university to hand down? I think not. And therefore we must pause before turning our backs on either, or risk losing that great good place altogether. It seems to me that universities cannot be separated from these deep-running traditions, except in death.

How then did universities aspire to be when their traditions were more vigorously maintained? (Of course they did not always live up to their principles, but that is a constant among all institutions.) Their aim was not the suppression from the curriculum of all that would challenge received views, but rather the exclusion of all that would not comprehend them, of all that, by its sheer idiocy or baseness, was unworthy of them. And they sought the inclusion of what was excellent and high-minded. This is the type of discrimination that still is warranted, no, indispensable, in admissions and in curriculum.

Imagine now a university in which the students were admitted according to their abilities and the curriculum chosen for its excellence. It would then be necessary to discriminate in hiring faculty as well. But in this claim, at least, I encounter much less opposition from today's reformers. Those who detest and reject the sort of discrimination discussed above, demanding universal admissibility for students and universal pabulum for curriculum, will nevertheless agree that we need discrimination in hiring. Gone are the days when educational reformers pled for selection solely by merit, that is, for color- and gender-blindness. Today they want us to discriminate in favor of women, ethnic minorities, and so forth. Educational conservatives, judging the argument bad by the company it keeps, frequently find themselves arguing against discrimination, and for strict meritocracy. I think this, at best, a partial truth on two grounds: first, because meritocracy should be acknowledged to be itself a form of discrimination, though, of course, warranted, and second, on the other side, because it stops short of discriminating to the extent that is warranted.

The notion of merit is brother to the job description. Both are at home in the factory, whence they derive, but the latter is not at home in the university. There, precisely because the task is not mindless, it cannot be reduced to the abstractions of a job description, nor can merit be calculated piecemeal, by publications, marks, letters, distinctions, and so on. Nor, usually, is it best judged by committee. Hiring is far more the all-around concern of finding a person fit to teach certain things, fit to lead a scholarly and philosophical life in public, and likely to win able young people to that life as well. One should not normally expect to find many candidates fit for a given position. Only when such rare embarrassments of riches

obtain would relative “merit,” as it is nowadays conceived, come into question.

To think that abstractly conceived merit alone can establish a university is in fact to go along with the very metaphysical principle from which the radical reformers draw their strength. Their view is that institutions have no essences, no natures, but that they are infinitely malleable, always ready to be reshaped more nearly to the heart’s desire. The liberal and Christian catholic institution is nothing to them. Worse than nothing. They view it with shame and ignorant hostility. Under pressure of such anti-essentialist thinking, years before the ripening of the current crop of reformers, we had already traded away our universities for what Clark Kerr called “multiversities,” vast conceptual warehouses, with no unifying purpose or principles. Alumni who strive to see that the building, the campus, the titles and names of the alma mater survive, often fail to realize that the institution they loved has long since had its body snatched by alien and unlovely invaders. The new reformers simply want to use the all-purpose pluralistic site our campuses have now become for their own political ends, getting rid of every vestige of its original vocation. They would like to see it put to multiple, indiscriminate uses by a hodgepodge of unregulated tenants. The conservative, who in place of this can only offer some feeble talk of meritocracy, is seen by reformers with some plausibility to be merely another political assassin, though a particularly greedy and arrogant one, casting lots among the others for the robes of academe.

Resistance likely to make any difference comes only from two groups, one of which is dwindling fast—those old enough to remember what universities were like. The other consists of young people who perceive that they have been cheated of their inheritance. But what are these groups’ chances of success? None, in my opinion, if success is conceived as a victory imposed by force on universities or soci-

eties. The reform must start from groups and individuals committed to it, who grasp the meaning of Chesterton’s *mot*—there’s something wrong with the world and I’m it. Students who want an education must seek it actively and, as they grow in discernment, pass the word about those who can and those who can’t, or won’t, provide it. Professors who still know anything must seek capable students willing to learn it. And those with an influence on hiring must try to see not that abstractly conceived “merit,” the sterile notion of the multiversity, prevails, but rather proficiency in Oakeshott’s “conversation of mankind,” broadly construed as including our Christian as well as our liberal inheritance.

I am not recommending the parochialization (in either sense) of education, nor the reintroduction of doctrinal tests of admission or hiring, nor yet an “index” of deviant curricular materials. I am echoing the challenge to “remember who we are” and discriminate accordingly, hiring those who have gathered strength out of our culture and who can communicate its historical vigor to the young. Every clergyman knows that the zealous atheist is not half so dangerous to believers as an unbroken series of professors who, from ignorance and sloth, have no religious views. Similarly, the liberal-for-want-of-a-better-name, the Nietzschean “last man,” by his unreasoned nihilism is a menace to his students, whereas the learned antinomian or culture critic merely provokes them to develop skills in disputation. The university, therefore, need neither fear, nor exclude from its faculty, our culture’s most articulate detractors. But neither must it repeat the error of making them the center of its mission. Instead it must urgently consolidate and further our great heritage which, by grace rather than merit, has not yet been everywhere irreparably destroyed. To serve this end would be to engage in warranted discrimination. F1

Walker Percy and the Christian Scandal

Marion Montgomery

In Washington, where he was to give the eighteenth Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities on May 3, 1989, Walker Percy also gave an interview to Scott Walter for *Crisis*. This is almost exactly a year before his death, and both the interview and his lecture, "The Fateful Rift: The San Andreas Fault in the Modern Mind," reflect not only his journey up to that point, but a continuing concern for the meaning of the journey and to a degree a continuing ambiguity in his understanding of intellectual experience. He still shares with Binx Bolling an amused wonder in the presence of experience, still somewhat divided of mind as to the dependability of immediate experience, a condition suited to the novelist. Perhaps the point can best be presented by noticing the divided sense in which Percy uses the term *liberal* in his interview.

A problem arises in his discomfort with the liberal mind, with which he nevertheless shares causes. "I agree with them on almost everything: their political and social causes, and the ACLU, God knows, the right to freedom of speech, to help the homeless, the poor, the minorities." But the liberal position on abortion and euthanasia is "a mystery, a bafflement to me." Their "hearts are in the right place," but "they cannot see the paradox of being in favor of these good things and yet not batting an eyelash when it comes to destroying unborn life."

First of all, there is a question here as to whether we are dealing with a paradox or with a contradiction. But a more troubling question is whether the "liberal" whom Percy has in mind addresses the causes he accepts enthusiastically in the same manner

of intellectual deportment to those causes as Percy does. For this "liberal" may in actuality deport himself to good causes and bad without discrimination, so that his attitude toward abortion or euthanasia is neither paradoxical nor contradictory. In other words, it is possible that one may deport oneself, even to good causes, without one's heart being "in the right place." That is the climactic recognition of T. S. Eliot's Thomas Becket at the edge of martyrdom, who in horror steps back from the most subtle treason to the soul, that is, doing "the right thing for the wrong reason."

These words of Percy's about his "liberal" friends and acquaintances occur after some talk in the interview about *tenderness*. Mr. Walter has asked whether Percy meant a tribute to Flannery O'Connor in Fr. Smith's words in *Thanatos Syndrome*: "Don't you know where tenderness leads? . . . It leads to the gas chamber." He'd like to give Miss O'Connor the credit, Percy responds, but it wasn't a conscious use. He had in mind his own experience of the German people as "extremely sentimental," possessed of a "tremendous tenderness." And he emphasizes here, as he does in other interviews, the comparison implied in his last novel between the Western liberal and the Weimar Republic liberal in relation to the effects of Weimar tenderness as executed in Nazi Germany and our own obsession with the right to abortion. "Nothing offends the American liberal more than being compared to the German liberals of the Weimar Republic." He cites *The Defense of the Destruction of Life Without Value*, by two "liberal Weimar doctors," emphasizing that it appeared in what was "probably the most liberal democracy in Europe." What Percy knows is that the "whole notion [of euthanasia and abortion] is very reasonable without the Christian ethic." To talk of "the sacredness of life," unless "you

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really mean it," cannot but support the improvement of life by the systematic eradication of people whose "quality of life" is inferior. One can, in defense of the sacredness of life, be suddenly in the position of executing the program of the liberal Weimar doctors, which of course comes to pass under Nazi rule, under "national socialism."

We may begin by correcting the citation of Flannery O'Connor, who is very careful in what she says of *tenderness*. The quoted passage is from her introduction to *A Memoir of Mary Ann*. Castigating a "popular piety" such as associated with liberalism in its political and social rhetoric, she says that we "mark our gain in sensibility and our loss of vision," in that having lost faith, "we govern by tenderness," a tenderness "wrapped in theory." And then her precise words: "When tenderness is detached from the source of tenderness [i.e., Christ] its logical outcome is terror. It ends in forced-labor camps and in the fumes of the gas chamber." The important point is that tenderness is not the problem in itself, for tenderness properly oriented is a desirable deportment toward creation. But when that manifestation of disoriented tenderness occurs again as dissipated by an almost universal acceptance of abortion, Mother Teresa is right to say (as Percy quotes her): "If a mother can kill her unborn child, I can kill you, and you can kill me." Since Mother Teresa spoke these words, we note, euthanasia as a public policy has been submitted to plebiscite in our own country. The issue, then, is not tenderness, no better example of which is among us than Mother Teresa's, but the distortion of that sentiment by separating it from its source in Christ, which separation Flannery O'Connor characterizes as sentimentality.

The general sense of experience in our age, the most common bond among our separated selves, is the sense of a derangement, and Percy (among others) finds this an effect of the Cartesian displacement of consciousness. What we are left with, let us say, is a residual element of sentiment, an intuitive inclination to tenderness, that finds no proper orientation in respect either to nature or to human nature. Tenderness separated from the source of tenderness thus supports a "popular piety" that goes unexamined, a piety in which liberalism in its decline establishes dogmatic rights, rights that in an extreme—as presently in the arguments for abortion in the political sphere and for "popular culture" in the academic—become absolute dogma to be accepted and not examined. To examine that dogma might perhaps serve to restore tenderness to its proper source. Indeed, the attempt at that rescue and restoration is the disturbing aspect of Percy's fiction, disturbing to the "liberal" mind in its common manifestation among us.

What is somewhat discomfiting about Percy as dialectician—and the dialectical is the principal

aspect of his fiction, as well as central to his other work, including his interviews—is his seeming inconstancy in holding the advocates of tenderness to account in their various causes, even those separate from euthanasia and abortion, those other causes to which he himself is committed. Those are causes he tends to ally himself with—but precisely out of his commitment to the "source of tenderness." Despite his confession of sympathy to shared causes, he does not actually "agree with [the liberals] on almost everything." To help the homeless, the blacks—that is, minorities as abstractions—to defend free speech with Pavlovian tenderness, is far from Percy's own ground of defense. He has been incisive, for instance, in castigating that species of abortion and euthanasia practiced upon language in the name of semiotics, a destruction of language now raised to an academic principle.

To do the right thing (to clothe the poor and comfort the widow) for the wrong reason is the greatest treason. But it is most destructively a treason to the would-be comforter's own soul. With this, Percy would undoubtedly agree. Walter, in the course of his interview, asks Percy his reaction to Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*, remarking Bloom's original title, *Soul Without Longing*, and recalling Father James Schall's quip that the title should be *Longing Without Soul*. (Of Bloom, Percy remarks, "I suspect he is a nihilist.") If we take Father Schall's pointed jest and explore it in relation to Walker Percy's own long journey, we see the heart of Percy's concern, a concern central to his fascination with the mystery of sign, of language, in relation to the reality we experience either by a deportment through ordinate sentiment to reality or a deportment of sentimentality, that is, a manner divorced from reality.

What we might say is that the modern condition of the person is of a soul longing for its recovery as soul, longing for an escape from the reductionism of *person* to mere *self*, to consciousness disoriented from reality. And we find Percy wrestling with this condition not only in his concern for semiotics, but in his own ambiguous address to himself as Southern writer. In taking up this strain of his thought, his "Southernness," I must make it clear at once that I myself am centrally concerned with "Southernness," by which I do not mean a limited historical or geographical reduction to the local accidents of place. My own position is that we are born provincial but if blessed in our labors by grace may become regionalists. That is, we may at last come to some accommodation in our necessary journeying, our wayfaring in time and space, in relation to the present realities of explicit time and place that are always conditions to our actual existence as persons. Much more is involved, I contend, in respect to Percy as "Southerner" than his inclination to credit to his "Southern-

ness" only the texture of his fictions, as he is inclined to do. On this question, there is much more to say. Meanwhile, however, we take up his response to Scott Walter's question about himself as Southerner.

In discussing the loss of culture, manners, belief—once associated with the American South as stereotypical, in contrast to the North as the "land of industry"—Percy remarks the dissolving of those differences, though in some degree they once obtained in our history. He says, however, that now his grandchildren are "like the kids in Dubuque, Iowa." That this sea change has occurred, I believe, is an effect of "liberal" sentimentality, by which I mean to suggest at once that the Iowa children suffer as well as the Louisiana Percy children. The "Christian scandal," Percy says in this interview, is its "emphasis on individual human life." Without that scandalous emphasis, anything goes, including the gas chambers. The importance of encounter of person with immediate existence, the accommodation to *this* place and *this* time, which is so heavy a theme in recent literature of the American South, is exactly the issue, though reduced in its implications whenever frozen in our accounting for it by a reduction to mere history or geography. That is, the concern requires a metaphysical perspective beyond the account of history or naturalistic geography.

The liberal response of tenderness, then, which makes the Louisiana child and the Iowa child hardly distinguishable in their manifestations in time and place, begins with a denial of personhood in its fundamental actuality. Put briefly, sentimentality is a distortion of proper sentiment as oriented by the realities of time and place and thus a distortion of significant creation. It begins with a dislocated emphasis on egalitarianism, a shifting of perspective from the essence of personhood to the accidents of personhood in a reductionism of discrete entities to identities of each other in the name of "equality." It is accomplished through a nominalism in service to pragmatic attempts to restructure the accidents of existence, under the mistaken supposition that accident is substance. Thus the dislocation of sign from reality by nominalism makes ready the manipulations of gnostic intellect. Required: an assault on and dislocation of the sign in its relation to the actuality of the signifier (the sign user) by the removal of meaning in sign. Through that subversion the proper relation of personhood to the present reality is destroyed. There is no better instance of the point than the effect of the media in reducing the diversely known by actual personal experience to a putative sameness. To hear the media tell it, the Des Moines child and the Louisiana child are identities, not persons, a manipulation possible through the sentimentality attaching to an abstraction, "child." That distortion involves, in its reaches, even the reduction of the voice of signs, the reduction to a common "accent."

Indeed, in the leveling of "North" and "South"

following the most recent invasion of the South by the North as the new "land of industry" there develop "schools" devoted to removing "Southern" accents from employees. Now in this dislocation of a person from the immediacy of place, he is left with mere "feeling" toward whatever object of attention is not the self. Feeling replaces the possibility of a full communion in being itself with that which is not the self. To suppose, then, that the actual South known by the novelist and used by him makes him a "Southern writer" only insofar as he uses that knowledge as a matter convenient to his form is to misunderstand the complexity of place to the soul. It is to misunderstand the nature of man as a wayfarer who must learn not only to be *at* a place but *in* a place as well.

And that is the tensional conflict in Percy's Binx Bolling in *The Moviegoer*. Here lies the center of the mystery of our existence as person, as wayfarer in time and place, Percy's continuous theme. About that theme he expresses himself ambiguously as often as not. The ambiguity enriches the fiction, surely. And expressing himself so, he associates himself with his protagonists in a complexity echoing the relation of James Joyce to his Stephen. What is meant by this cryptic analogy we may discover in turning to Binx as Percy comments on him in another interview, one in which he talks with French critics in a trans-Atlantic conversation on December 3, 1986, in which Judlyn Liffy of Worldnet conducted a televised exchange between Walker Percy and a gathering of French scholars. The occasion was the inclusion of *The Moviegoer* on the reading list in English and American literature for that year's examination in Agregation d'Anglais for future teachers. Percy, he was told by the panel's moderator, Professor Claude Richard of the University of Montpellier, was included with such notables as "Shakespeare, John Donne, Oliver Goldsmith, Alfred Lord Tennyson, and Dashiell Hammett." To be on that reading list, Professor Richard said, "is, in France, like ultimate recognition." With that preparation, Professor Richard propounded the first question, the one Percy had to contend with from his early recognition as novelist to the end: "Do you consider yourself as a Southern writer and, if so, what features of your work do you regard as peculiarly Southern?"

After a mannerly response to the honor of being included on the reading list, Percy answered the question that never would go away. It would not go away in large part because it was a question gnawing at the root of his own intellectual blossoming, a question he had come to but uncertain terms with in an earlier interview, the now-famous one with himself. There he both asked the questions and answered them, in a self-interrogation that rejected questions about his "Southernness" and yet returned inescapably to that question. For the panel of French scholars he responds, "Yes, of course I am a Southern writer."

But he is so "in the sense that I depend on my Southern background for the decor, the setting, the sense of place which any novelist must have." And, given his audience perhaps, he adds at once: "I owe less to Faulkner and Southern writers and indeed American writers than to certain French writers: to be specific, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Gabriel Marcel, and to go back a way, Blaise Pascal."

In matters intellectual it is of course, as Percy well knew, most difficult to sort out one's influences. Nor does it help much to give an accounting of one's debt to particular thinkers, since such an attention to one's relation to other minds in the intellectual community, whose life is continuous in time and beyond discrete place through the mystery of sign itself, violates the reality necessary to that community. One is not so much indebted to a particular mind in imitation of that mind as he is an inheritor of truth about reality insofar as that mind has cogently expressed it and turned one to desire the truth of things. There is surely, between Percy and Faulkner, a shared climate of thought about time and place as manifested in their fictions, and there is certainly a common concern for Southern stoicism between them. There is as well a recognition of that climate as encountered in Faulkner on the part of Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre reveals this recognition in his essays on Faulkner. This climate of intellectual concern with time and place, for instance, which dominates discussions of "Southern" literature at a largely superficial level, is inescapable to human experience of existence itself, whatever one's "South." It is crucial, at last, to any person's understanding of his own nature and is not reserved as what "any novelist must have."

Percy recognizes this mystery of our immaterial (intellectual) nature as involved in our material (incarnate) nature as the combining of person through the soul, which St. Thomas defines as the substantial form of the body. *Person* is thus necessarily situated circumstantially in a time and a place, a mystery Percy explores in his concern for the word, the sign. It is the concern that led him along the way to accept the Word made flesh. In his colloquy with the French professors, then, he must have anticipated their next question, as often asked as the one about his being a Southern writer: are you a Catholic writer? And to this he gives an answer analogous to his first. His being Catholic as a writer has to do "not so much with explicit faith or transmitting an explicit faith in my writings as it has to do with what I would call an anthropology." He is not speaking of anthropology in the American sense, the sense that spawns much of the American discussion about his Southernness, but rather of that intellectual concern—more typically European—for "a view of man, of a theory of man, man as more than an organism, as more than consumer, man as Gabriel Marcel describes him, a 'homo viator,' man the wayfarer,

man the pilgrim, man in transit, on a journey."

It is no accident that Percy summons Flannery O'Connor to such questions as well; but unlike her, he does not anchor his response in St. Augustine and St. Paul (we have here no abiding place) nor in St. Thomas, whose argument is insistent that the poet's, the artist's, responsibility is to the good of the thing being made, not with the correction of appetites in his audience. What lies behind Percy's limitation of his answer, one suspects, is his sense of membership in that recent intellectual community concerned with man the wayfarer, a community descended most directly from Kierkegaard to that French intellectual who has been much celebrated in the academy as Existentialist. Flannery O'Connor, too, is sometimes concerned with that particular community of thought, and rather devastating in her satirical treatment of it. Her Bible salesman, for instance, in "Good Country People" may be said to make the point that one need not have a doctoral degree from the Sorbonne to believe in nothing. He "was born believing in nothing." Such a recognition allowed Miss O'Connor a somewhat more immediate access to "place" than Percy at first enjoyed. His is a journey from which he comes home at last by way of European thought of a recent vintage.

What began to be more and more certain for him was that the wayfarer is precisely that because of the circumstances of time and place, the wayfarer being one who wanders from place to place. But he seems increasingly to have realized that the wandering was primarily a journey of the mind. To have settled in Feliciana in Louisiana and lived there so many years, only reluctantly leaving that temporary home to go to Washington, D.C. or Notre Dame, or even abroad, allowed him a more manageable journey as a wayfarer within the immediate, the local, the concrete. For such is the great scandal to man, as he said in the Washington interview, of an "emphasis on individual life" (and here he means that Christian sense of personhood). There is the added scandal: that such an individual life can exist only in some place. Every thing has to be some *place*, and a person does not escape place by moving, as so many of the early American expatriates thought possible in moving to France.

Such was Percy's recognition as he talked to the Spanel of French scholars about himself as a Southern, Catholic writer, and he used his first protagonist, Binx Bolling of *The Moviegoer*, to talk about his own "identity." His concern is at a level deeper than the American anthropological concern with "religion" and "race" and "local history," the usual limits of his interlocutor's interest. Binx is a figure of modern man as wanderer. That is, Binx is deracinated, though he cannot escape his history and he is rather restricted geographically. The local signifies to him, but only when it is a part of that strange abstrac-

tionism practiced upon the local by the movie. He is fascinated by the movie's accommodation to place whereby place seems at last made real. It is made real not in itself, but through the images projected on a screen. One cannot escape a metaphorical analogue to Binx: the parable of Plato's cave. And to be reminded of that parable is to recognize Binx as a wanderer within a limited local compass: a small geography that provides all the complexity of place as one might discover that complexity the world over, insofar as man is wayfarer, that is, insofar as man is a soul seeking its cause as a "self." What is missing is a recognition of the full sun upon reality, to be encountered only if one abandons the tunnel vision of the self trapped in the cave of self-awareness, the Cartesian curse.

It is clear that Percy feels toward Binx as a father to a son, seeing more of himself in Binx than he might admit under direct questioning, though that kinship emerges in his own self-questioning interview. Here to the French scholars he says, for instance, that out of Binx's sense of dislocation he is searching for some way (in Binx's words) to "stick" himself "into the world." In his later interview on the occasion of the Jefferson Lecture, he speaks of modern man as *deranged*, the literal sense of that term most appropriate to the Cartesian dislocation of intellect that has effected our displacement from the proper range of our being in the world. What, he asks, "are the options for characters living in a deranged world in which the Church is no longer regnant, no longer terribly important in many places?" That is the question initiating his several protagonists' quests as wayfarers, whether Will Barrett's journey to New York City and points North and his return to his baffling South, or Binx Bolling's wanderings about New Orleans.

Binx, Percy tells his French admirers in his trans-Atlantic interview, is playing a certain game, though he "doesn't know it." He is "doing what Kierkegaard would call exercises in repetition and rotation. . . . He is a victim of your great René Descartes, to whom I attribute many of the troubles of the modern world." But what is significant to Binx's journeying is his quest for signification: he "looks for signs." And, with a foreshadowing of the same concern for sign that Percy pursues in *Thanatos Syndrome*, Binx finds one particular sign to be his "particular way of thinking of the Jews." Try as he may, he cannot subsume them by sign. They escape "the theories of the books," being always something more than can be said of them by words. Binx recognizes a kinship here that escapes his understanding of himself as dislocated in time and place in relation to the Wandering Jew, who is not a literary shibboleth but a reality eluding his grasp. He feels a kinship that evades him. As for this dislocation in Binx, Percy says, "I balance the question very delicately between the hero or the protagonists of most of my novels."

The question is the meaning of dislocation itself.

As for Binx specifically, his "real dislocation" is "from the ordinary modes of existence in America; existence as consumer, as recipient of all the goods and services of technology." But it is more complex, this dislocation, since Binx is "an exile from his own traditions. I placed him very consciously as a certain consciousness placed between two traditions in the South. One is from his father's side . . . a very strong ethical stoic tradition which owes less to Christianity than it does to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, and the stoic philosophers. . . . The other tradition is his mother's family which is middle-class bourgeois New Orleans Catholic." In dramatizing Binx as dislocated intellectual, Percy raises the delicate question: "Who is dislocated—are the consumers, the businessmen, the professional men, the happy scientists who are busy; busy with their various works?" The answer to that question for Percy is that *all* are dislocated. All are dislocated by the very nature of human existence which necessitates one's being a wayfarer. He adds, "Maybe the philosophical progenitor is Pascal who said 'To be born and to live is to be dislocated.'"

The agony in wayfaring is the difficulty of orientation, which Binx solves inadequately by his obsession with moviegoing, his Kierkegaardian repetition and rotation. Percy implies its inadequacy in calling our attention to the time-span of his novel, "the two or three days at the end of the Mardi Gras season." And the last scene on the last day is an occasion of an epiphany, not only in the Joycean sense, but in the O'Connor sense as well. On Ash Wednesday, Binx, whose talent as observer of other people's wanderings is (as he says) "to see the way people stick themselves into the world," observes a black man leaving a church, a smudge on his forehead. It is a moment revealing of Binx's displaced Cartesian awareness, in which he observes others and sees with a detachment that excludes him from the world into which those others insert themselves. It is Kate, practiced in observing Binx at his own detached observation, who most nearly draws him into the world, by recognizing the nature of the "game" Binx is playing in his Kierkegaardian exercises of repetition and rotation. The two moments: first, Binx's seeing the black man leaving the church after Ash Wednesday ritual, with an acceptance of the necessity, as Binx would have it, of "inserting himself into the world"; second, Binx's own ceremony of moviegoing whereby he seems to come to terms with place but in actuality does not. It is this latter moment that Kate explores. Binx's fascination with movies, she tells him, lies in their certifying place as a reality. *Place*, the old problem of "Southernness" which is independent as a problem to any wayfaring man of any specific geography, as it is independent of any specific time in the history of place.

What Binx thinks to have accomplished experien-

tially through his moviegoing is a rescue of place from its encumbrance by consciousness itself. It is a way of dissolving, as it were, the detachment from place, a moment of rest from wayfaring in which, as Kate says, place reveals its "peculiar reality." What his experience of place through the movies seems to overcome is that burden upon place which, as Percy remarks, is the Heideggerian "everydayness." Place seems in its reality transformed, and by the mystery of the movie as an art form. It is in this context of Binx's wonder that the momentary encounter with the sojourner on the church steps reveals both Binx's hunger and the inadequacy of the food his hunger finds. For truth is the proper food of intellect, and the existential food proves ersatz, as Percy suspects, though he is never quite able himself to escape its attraction. He is drawn to it always, as some of us are to McDonald burgers. Binx's "theory of certification," as Percy calls it, implies a search underway—very much Percy's own—whose object seems now near, now impossibly far away. But that sense of nearness or farness is teasing always, insofar as it always appears in our experience of time and place.

Let us say that the search, which is common to us all by our very given natures as created intellect, is for a valid self-forgetting in which place and time are real beyond geography and history. The adjacent world in this moment seems always inadequate to the desire, but only inasmuch as the wayfarer cannot escape the ambiance that his own consciousness imposes upon place in relation to his own awareness, that Heideggerian "everydayness." That is the obstacle to visionary encounter with place, a conspicuous manifestation of which is Descartes' legacy to Western thought. What is desired, and made possible to *homo viator* through this moment in this place, is a visionary encounter, first with being and, necessarily consequential to that encounter, with the Cause of being. That is why the moment's encounter with the worshiper on the church steps is profoundly important, though but a moment's encounter to Binx. The deep is not necessarily the long or the large. Magnitude is, at last, not dependent on time-space, though Binx stops shy of that recognition and not many readers will themselves appreciate the dramatic burden carried by that brief encounter in the action of Percy's first novel.

The significant analogue to Binx's fascination with the movie is the Mass. The movie is the Cartesian reductionist version of reality, a substitute for the Mass, through which Binx attempts to certify his own validity as person. In the end, we might say, the rival philosophers are more ancient than those Percy cites in discussing his work in this interview. Rather than Descartes, Pascal, Kierkegaard, the French Existentialists, they are Plato and Aquinas, for the polarity in Binx's tensional quest is that between Idealism and Realism. The problem is older than Descartes

and Pascal, as it is older than Aquinas and Plato as well, the wanderer's seeking an encounter of the timeless under the burden of time, the abiding under the burden of fading place.

This issue, and the inadequacy of Binx's solution at this point of his journey, is spoken to with subtle irony in relation to the movie "hero," with implications beyond Binx's understanding. Percy says to the French scholars: "Living in an ordinary neighborhood . . . one is uncertified: one goes about one's business; one sees the same people who are, more or less, alive—maybe more dead than alive; victim to what Heidegger would call 'everydayness.' And yet when this very same, ordinary scene is represented in the movies, it all of a sudden becomes alive; it becomes certified." Percy is speaking of Binx's "theory of certification," but there is at least a degree of consent to that theory in his own speaking. We have seen Binx encounter the Ash Wednesday worshiper. We see him also observing people observe William Holden, on movie location in New Orleans. Binx is interested, says Percy, in "this extraordinary phenomenon—which I am, too—the aura of reality around movie stars who are perhaps the most unreal of all people, in truth."

One regrets that in the interview Percy did not underline more firmly the relation of this fascination with the unreal as if real, this malaise of the modern mind, by turning to that other hero, who once for all rescued sign in relation to place, the Christ on the altar, in Whom the Word is a presence orienting time and place, the abiding Signpost in the desert. He might well have pointed more sharply to his own wily juxtaposition of signs in the novel, that of the movie's illusion of reality and the moment's encounter of the black man on the church steps, the sign of the cross smudged on his forehead with the ashes of the inescapable exile in the wandering season of Lent that is man's lot as *homo viator*. But the pointing in an interview, not in the novel itself of course, is the place for remarking the juxtaposition explicitly. In the novel he is attempting the task proper to the poet, the recovery of signifying sign to his reader. In our age, in which we have lost the significance of the mystery in sign, let alone the limited signification of truth in any particular sign, it is not amiss in the poet, when he is confronted by inquisitive theorists and urged to pronounce upon the nature of his peculiar calling—the rescue of sign—to speak directly for that labor Eliot calls the purification of the dialect of the tribe.

That is the task Percy recognized, of course, out of his faith, his orientation through sign to the Word. But in his intellectual exploration as *homo viator*, he does not always seem to recognize the extent of his own accomplishment in justifying the profound "Southernness" which is always at issue. In this "Southernness" lies an anthropology beyond both the

American and, at least since Descartes, the European species of anthropology—a recognition of the wayfarer as created intellect lost and wandering in the desert until he becomes oriented to reality through such signs as may rest their limited significance in specific time and place, as that complex is governed by the Word. The “everydayness” of the elements of the Mass mediate the reality of time and place to intellect, justifying existential reality at last as rescued. The ersatz food of art divorced from its relation to the creating Signifier through being, God, the Cause of moments of time and points of place, at this juncture of my next step on the journey, is poor food indeed. It is in turning from false fare to true that the

soul finds the desert abloom. Recovered now “the salt savour of the sandy earth” as “the lost heart stiffens and rejoices” in hope of rescue, as Eliot discovered. That is a considerable step on the way to recognition that “all manner of thing shall be well.” And that is the recognition that Percy, like Eliot before him, comes to in his journeying within the confines of time and place. That is the recognition Percy hints at, in remarking the background of that painted portrait of himself in his self-interview, “Questions They Never Asked Me So He Asked Them Himself”: “The no-man’s land barbed wire is not really wire but a briar and it is blooming! A rose!”^[FT]

Memento Mori

What do the living know
about the dead? I was called upon
to wonder when the well-meaning
camp director’s wife who knew
parts of my family asked
where I stood in relation
to the brother who’d died, she had heard.
Died? I said. Yes, I believe, cancer,
she said. Oh, I said, that,
I believe, was me, and I am yet —
even taking odd pleasure along
with the pang of being a ghost —
among the living.

(What do, after all, the living
know about the dead, me included?)

James Andrew Miller

(James Andrew Miller is author of “Other Plans: Journal of an Illness,” FT, March.)

Books In Review

Ignorant Armies

THE CREATIONISTS: THE EVOLUTION OF SCIENTIFIC CREATIONISM. By RONALD L. NUMBERS. Knopf. 458 pp. \$27.50.

Reviewed by Mark A. Noll

RONALD L. NUMBERS, who holds a chair in the History of Science and Medicine at the University of Wisconsin, has performed a desperately needed service in this book, and he has performed it very well. Toward the end of the volume there is trenchant, if succinct, interpretation, but mostly this is a chronicle—thorough, patient, even-handed, and exhaustively researched—of twentieth-century “creationism.” (“Creationism,” by rights, should define all who discern a divine mind at work in, with, or under the phenomena of the natural world; but alas, the term has, by a most unfortunate set of events, come to mean only the view that God created the world ten thousand or fewer years ago and that God used a world-wide flood in the days of Noah to form the geological conditions that most modern scientists think reveal an ancient earth with evolutionary changes over great expanses of time. Hence the inverted commas.) Among its other virtues, Numbers’ book explains where this “creationist” view came from and how the hijacking of the word took place.

Despite a widespread impression to the contrary, “creationism” was not a traditional belief of nineteenth-century conservative Protestants or even of early-twentieth-century fundamentalists. During the century before the 1930s, most conservative Protestants believed that the “days” of Genesis, chapter one, stood for long ages of geological de-

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velopment or that a lengthy gap existed between the initial creation of the world (Gen. 1:1) and a series of more recent creative acts (Gen. 1:2ff.) during which the fossils were deposited. Some conservative Protestants early in the century—like James Orr of Scotland and B. B. Warfield of Princeton Theological Seminary, both of whom wrote for *The Fundamentals* (1910-15)—even allowed for large-scale evolution from one or only a few original life forms as a way of explaining God’s way of creating plants, animals, and even the human body. (Their position came close to official Roman Catholic teachings on the subject.) Popular opponents of evolution in the 1920s like William Jennings Bryan had no difficulty accepting an ancient earth. Bryan, with an acuity that his patronizers rarely perceive, saw clearly that the great problem with evolution was not the practice of science but the metaphysical naturalism and consequent social Darwinism that scientific evolution was often called upon to justify.

MODERN CREATIONISM AROSE, by contrast, from the efforts of earnest Seventh-day Adventists who wanted to show that the sacred writings of Adventist-founder Ellen G. White (who made much of a recently created earth and the Noachian deluge) could provide a framework for studying the history of the earth. Especially important for this purpose was the Adventist theorist, George McCready Price (1870-1963), who published a string of creationist works, most notably *The New Geology* (1923). That book argued that a “simple” or “literal” reading of early Genesis showed that God had created the world six to eight thousand years ago and had used the Flood to construct the planet’s geological past. Price, an armchair geologist with little formal training and almost no field experience, demonstrated how a person with such a belief could reconstruct natural history in order to question traditional understandings of the geological column and apparent indications that the earth was ancient. Price’s ideas

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were never taken seriously by practicing geologists, and they had little impact outside of Adventist circles. One exception was the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, where a few energized critics of the modern world found Price's biblical literalism convincing, despite the fact that on almost every other religious question the Missouri Synod was about as far removed from Seventh-day Adventism as it was possible to be. Although Price and various associates founded several creationist organizations (like the Deluge Geological Society), these groups were short-lived. Similarly, early creationist literature seemed to have little visible effect beyond a narrow circle. A few fundamentalists, like the Presbyterian minister Henry Rimmer (1890-1952), proposed somewhat similar views concerning the Flood, but Rimmer's influence had much diminished by the time of his death.

When a rising corps of university-trained conservative evangelical scientists founded the American Scientific Affiliation (ASA) in 1941, creationist "flood geologists" thought this society would provide a receptive forum for their conclusions. It did not. Although leaders of the ASA maintained strict views of biblical authority and defended the sovereignty of God over the natural world, almost all of them held to the older day/age or gap theories, or came to feel that divine revelation in Genesis and natural revelation from empirical investigation did not need to be harmonized in the ways that had been repeatedly tried, revised, and tried again since the early nineteenth century. Numbers' documentation of the internal struggles of the ASA, and involving institutions like Wheaton College, which provided a number of leaders for the early ASA, is meticulous. Better than in any previous account he reveals the complexity, multiplicity, and divergences within the postwar intellectual world of conservative Protestant evangelicals.

Nothing daunted, creationists continued to prosecute their case. At last, in the late 1950s, a breakthrough occurred. John C. Whit-

comb, Jr. (b. 1924), a theologian at Grace Theological Seminary (Winona Lake, Indiana) of the Grace Brethren denomination, and Henry M. Morris (b. 1918), a hydraulic engineer of Southern Baptist background, had each been moving in a creationist direction for quite a while before finding confirmation in Price's work. Each was also disturbed by a book published in 1954 by the evangelical Baptist theologian, Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, which had delighted most members of the ASA by proposing a much more flexible approach to reconciling evidence from nature and understanding from the Bible. Soon after Whitcomb and Morris met each other they published *The Genesis Flood* (1961), an updating of Price's work, but one that, because of Whitcomb's theological contribution and Morris' scientific expertise, made Price's points more persuasively.

THE REST IS HISTORY—massive demand for *The Genesis Flood* (twenty-nine printings and sales in excess of 200,000 by the mid-1980s); the popularization (by Whitcomb, Morris, and others) of the creationist viewpoint in tens of millions of other books, articles, pamphlets, and Sunday School lessons; the entrance of creationism into Britain (where before conservative anti-evolutionists had almost never promoted the idea of a young earth); the translation of creationist materials into many foreign languages (including Turkish, for use in Islamic education); a gradual movement by some creationists from a Christian-oriented "biblical creationism" to a public-oriented demand for equal time on behalf of "creation science"; the establishment and flourishing of several major institutes devoted to creationism; recruitment of spirited debaters to prosecute the creationist viewpoint in highly publicized public disputes with evolutionists; the eventual production of a few university-trained geologists upholding the creationist viewpoint; legislation in Arkansas and Louisiana, later overturned in court, providing for the

teaching of "creation science" as an alternative to evolutionary theories; public endorsement by presidential candidate Ronald Reagan of equal time for "creation science" in American schools; wounded reactions from the scientific establishment; and intense battles in many towns and cities over how evolution was or was not taught in the schools. In sum, since 1960 creationism has done more than any other issue, except abortion, to inflame the cultural warfare in American public life.

It is inconceivable that the story of creationism as an issue could be told any better than Ronald Numbers tells it here. Over eighty sets of personal papers, many still in private hands, and over sixty interviews have gone into his re-creation of this story, which he has in turn most skillfully integrated into the larger picture of twentieth-century American Protestantism. Certain telling details—such as his brief treatment of geocentrists, who were encouraged by the rise of creationism but felt that the creationists had conceded too much to modern science—flesh out the narrative in often fascinating ways. What results is a powerful story, one that Numbers recounts with considerable respect for the creationists whom establishment scientists rarely regard with anything but disdain.

For Numbers this story is also a poignant one: he himself grew up as a Seventh-day Adventist who only abandoned creationism—"quickly, though not painlessly," as he puts it in the introduction—while studying for a Ph.D. in the history of science at Berkeley in the late 1960s. (An extraordinarily moving account of Numbers' personal journey and the difficulties he encountered while pursuing the history of Adventist ideas is provided by Jonathan M. Butler in an introduction to the recent reissue of Numbers' *Prophets of Health: Ellen G. White and the Origins of Seventh-Day Adventist Health Reform* [University of Tennessee Press, 1992].)

THUS THE BOOK succeeds splendidly in its stated purpose of chronicling

the rise of creationism. In the end, however, the book is also quite convincing in its explanation of why creationism has exploded both in the United States and around the world since 1961. First, and doubtless of greatest importance, is the way creationism provides a worldview for many convinced believers in Scripture. In the words of David Watson, quoted by Numbers, "Tens of thousands of Christians have been convinced by Morris & Whitcomb's books because *they made sense of the Bible.*"

Second, Numbers notes that in the recent past a resurgence of apocalyptic speculation, based on the same kind of biblical literalism that underlies creationism, has flourished. "For Christians expecting the end of the age," as Numbers puts it, "Whitcomb and Morris offered a compelling view of earth history framed by symmetrical catastrophic events and connected by a common hermeneutic."

Third, in an argument paralleling the persuasive case made by Robert Wuthnow in *The Restructuring of American Religion*, Numbers suggests that the intrusion of the national government into local educational concerns has politicized all the topics that are seen to lie on the borders between science and religion. After *Sputnik*, the United States poured unprecedented amounts of money into a frenzied effort aimed at reinvigorating the teaching of science in American schools. One of the byproducts of this effort was the production of influential biology textbooks that not only introduced major contemporary findings, but also propounded grandly phrased metaphysical claims about the evolutionary character of the cosmos. Such hegemonic governmental intrusions have regularly produced intense localist reactions. Creationism has been one of the most intense.

Fourth, Numbers notes that creationists embody some of the widespread resentment toward America's self-appointed knowledge elites. As such, they are part of a natural reaction to the intellectual imperialism

so regularly practiced by a number of scholars at the nation's best-known universities. A world in which a physicist like Cornell's Carl Sagan becomes a guru concerning All Things, or a paleontologist like Harvard's Stephen Jay Gould presumes to define the theoretical limits of "science," is a world primed for an ancient languages expert like Whitcomb and an engineer like Morris to offer their own counter-pontifications about How The World Is.

HELPFUL AS Numbers is with such explanations, however, even more might have been said. Numbers' own account makes abundantly clear that the last thing creationism is concerned with is empirical observation of the natural world. Creationism is rather the deductive extrapolation from a particular pre-understanding of how the Bible should be read onto the metaphysical issues posed by modern theories of evolution. In fact, one of the most persistent themes in Numbers' study is how relatively unimportant the actual looking at the earth or the carrying out of experiments has been for the creationists. There is research, and there are experiments, but usually it is because the creationists are checking out something they have discovered in scientific literature that seems to pose problems for large-scale evolutionary theories. Creationism is, at root, religion. It has become politics because of the overweening metaphysical pretensions of elitist pundits exploiting the prestige of "science."

To observe that creationism is primarily religion, and then secondarily politics, does not disqualify it from a place in the public square, or from making comments on the workings of professional scientists or on the metaphysical assumptions of those who exploit "science" for their own expansive metaphysical claims. It means, rather, that responses to creationism must try to assess it for what it is. Numbers' volume is indispensable for that task. But the book also opens the door to larger interpretive questions.

Those larger questions are com-

plex, but on the basis of what Numbers has presented so well a few suggestions are possible. One is that the activity of creationists should be welcomed by all who regret the mindless ease with which, since at least the mid-nineteenth century, the popularizers and pundits have transformed the carefully qualified observations of working scientists into grandiose cosmological claims about the Nature of Things. Creationist literature is filled with oceans of nonsense, but has probably never descended to the level of obfuscating banality to be found in the anti-creationist pamphlet published in 1984 under the pretentious title, *Science and Creationism: A View from the National Academy of Sciences*. In this glossy booklet, distributed widely in American schools, are found choice bits of purest scientism, like the following quoted by Numbers: "In a nation whose people depend on scientific progress for their health, economic gains, and national security, it is of utmost importance that our students understand science as a system of study, so that by building on past achievements they can maintain the pace of scientific progress and ensure the continued emergence of results that can benefit mankind." Creationists have every right to be infuriated by such hokum, in which "science" takes over for God.

BUT IF creationists are justified in attacking the pretentious use of science to perform tasks once reserved for the deity, their own strategies are nonetheless a disaster in those discussions taking place at the intersection of Christianity (which has always made important claims to the reality of empirically observable events) and empirical science (which has always proceeded within the context of religious-like assumptions about the world). In other books, Numbers has been joined by colleagues in the history of science in showing how convoluted, complicated, and sometimes ironic these negotiations between "religion" and "science" have been in Western history. In *God and Nature*, edited by

Numbers and David Lindberg, however, it was pointed out that those negotiations, albeit delicate, have rarely led to outright intellectual warfare. But creationists push religion-science negotiations toward the brink of battle. Their work assumes that the Bible should be read in a Baconian fashion, which supposedly features the “simple,” “literal,” and “natural” meaning of texts. In actual fact, the hermeneutics of creationists are dictated by certain very specific assumptions that dominated Western intellectual life from roughly 1650 to 1850. Before and after that time, a whole host of observers, many of them faithful Christians, have recognized that no observations are “simple” and no texts yield to uncritically “literal” readings. The only major analogy to the creationists’ naive positivism with respect to texts is the naive positivism with respect to natural observations that lingers among some of those who worship at the shrine of modern “science.”

By adding their weight to the politicizing of science that has been going on with a vengeance at least since the time of “Darwin’s bulldog,” T. H. Huxley, creationists make it harder, rather than easier, to isolate the critical issues found at the intersection of religion and science. The roar of battle between creationists and their scientific opponents drowns out more patient, more careful voices. Those who want actually to look at nature as a way of understanding nature and those who want actually to look at themselves as a way of understanding how cosmological explanations are formed get shouted down. The great tragedy of modern creationism is that its noisy alarums have made it much more difficult to hear careful Christian thinkers—like many in the American Scientific Affiliation or like Phillip E. Johnson in his careful examinations of grand-scale “Darwinistic” theories (*Darwin on Trial*, 1991; “Creator or Blind Watchmaker?” *FIRST THINGS*, January 1993).

Finally, Numbers’ book shows that what goes around comes

around. It is sad to note how little progress has been made over the last century in framing questions concerning the relationship between God and the physical world. (And no one should claim that, even where clearer understanding exists on how to frame the issues, spectacular breakthroughs have occurred.) In his 1933 biography of Thomas Aquinas, G. K. Chesterton wrote words he intended as a retrospective but which are just as descriptive of the 1990s as of the 1860s. They could serve as a summation for Ronald Numbers’ extraordinarily helpful book: “Private theories about what the Bible ought to mean, and premature theories about what the world ought to mean, have met in loud and widely advertised controversy, especially in the Victorian time; and this clumsy collision of two very impatient forms of ignorance was known as the quarrel of Science and Religion.”

Attention Must Be Paid

MULTICULTURALISM AND “THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION.” An Essay by CHARLES TAYLOR. With Commentary by Amy Gutmann (Editor), Steven C. Rockefeller, Michael Walzer, and Susan Wolf. *Princeton University Press*. 112 pp. \$14.95.

Reviewed by Edward T. Oakes

LAST SUMMER a man was arrested in Germany for walking down the street wearing nothing except a cap, a wrist watch, and sneakers. After his arrest he said in his defense, “I’m struggling for my recognition.” And so it goes. This is perhaps but the most extreme example of what Charles Taylor in this fascinating book calls “the politics of recognition,” but so pervasive is this need of people to feel “recognized” by total strangers that recent immigrants to the West from other cultures notice it immediately. I can still remember the time an emigrant from Romania

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told me how strange she found interpersonal relationships here. In Romania, because of the ubiquity of the security police, one could never afford to say what one truly thought—except to a few carefully chosen people, numbering no more than ten or fifteen, whom one absolutely trusted. Outside of that tight circle, total conformity reigned. But when she got to the United States, she could not help but notice how any *public* expression of outrage or nonconformity was tolerated—but interpersonal relationships, on the other hand, seemed hollow and uncommunicative, rather like that dining room scene in the movie *Ordinary People*, with a mother, father, and son sitting around a vast table in a large suburban house and having nothing to say to one another.

It is almost as if recognition has become a public commodity, to be traded like soybean futures on the floor of the Chicago Board of Trade. Charles Taylor, the noted Canadian philosopher and author of a famous book on Hegel, has taken for his theme this peculiar emotional economy, whereby the public forum has become the national cry room and catharsis center for all sorts of hurts and grievances that would, at first glance anyway, seem to be private issues. The book is brief; it originated as a lecture (with responses which are included) to inaugurate the University Center for Human Values at Princeton University. But there can be no contemporary philosopher better attuned than Taylor to the vagaries of the career of the Self in Western culture, and in this lucid essay he has brought both his considerable learning and his gentle wisdom to bear on a topic that is becoming increasingly neuralgic and even enervating.

WHAT MAKES THE politics of recognition so difficult of resolution begins with the semantic shift from “honor” to “recognition.” Premodern societies valued honor, an inherently aristocratic and limited concept, bestowed only on the titled (serfs need not apply); whereas today every ecdysiast strolling the street

can demand "recognition" for his or her "art" of self-expression. But as Taylor well realizes, the transmutation of honor into recognition first requires the collapse of social hierarchies, which used to be the basis for honor. And thus honor, as he says, "is intrinsically linked to inequalities. For some to have honor in this sense, it is essential that not everyone have it." (In the *Iliad*, it is only the warlords who take umbrage at insults to their honor: just one commoner appears by name in Homer's first epic, and he is thrashed by Odysseus for speaking up in the lords' council.)

But the Enlightenment view of human nature stresses the inherent, and thus abstract, equality of every human person. It is therefore responsible for the abolition not just of social hierarchies but of the very concept of honor itself. Theoretically, then, every citizen of a society based on the proposition that "all men are created equal" should feel

equally recognized in his or her innate (inalienable) dignity as a human person. What muddies the picture is the Romantic gloss on the Enlightenment view of human nature: that each human being is not just equal but also *unique*:

There is a certain way of being human that is *my* way. I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else's life. But this notion gives a new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life; I miss what being human is for *me*. . . . Each of our voices has something unique to say. Not only should I not mold my life to the demands of external conformity; I can't even find the model by which to live outside myself. I can only find it within.

It is the intersection of these two

views of human nature—one stressing the abstract equality of all men, and the other the inimitable uniqueness of each personality—that according to Taylor accounts for the peculiarly desperate hunger that modern people bring to their interpersonal relationships, both idealizing those relationships beyond anything they can reasonably bear and yet turning away from them and toward the public square when the other person or persons cannot meet those impossible demands:

On the intimate level, we can see how much an original identity needs and is vulnerable to the recognition given or withheld by significant others. It is not surprising that in the culture of authenticity, relationships are seen as the key loci of self-discovery and self-affirmation. Love relationships are not just important because of the general empha-

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sis in modern culture on the fulfillments of ordinary needs. They are also crucial because they are the crucibles of inwardly generated identity.

Matthew Arnold, as great poets often do, brilliantly anticipated this sad dynamic at the end of his poem "Dover Beach," when the voice of the lover concludes with the exhortation: "Ah, love, let us be true/ to one another! for the world, which seems to lie before us like a land of dreams,/ . . . hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,/ nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;/ And here we are as on a darkling plain/ swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,/ Where ignorant armies clash by night."

There is, then, an intense vulnerability to personal relationships that has arisen from the collapse of honor and from the conflicting notions of what its substitute, recognition, can bestow. A new note has been struck in the history of friendship and marriage: that of desperation.

For Taylor, this desperation comes from the inherently irresolvable tensions between conflicting views of human nature, each of which forms an indispensable foundation stone to contemporary liberal society:

With the politics of equal dignity, what is established is meant to be universally the same, an identical basket of rights and immunities; with the politics of difference, what we are asked to recognize is the unique identity of this individual or group, their distinctness from everything else. The idea is that it is precisely this distinctness that has been ignored, glossed over, assimilated to a dominant or majority identity. And this assimilation is the cardinal sin against the ideal of authenticity.

In all the debates about multiculturalism—about Afro-centered curricula, for example, or affirmative action, or perhaps above all, femi-

nism—it is not sufficiently noted how inherently irresolvable this issue is when taken on its own terms. Society is being asked to provide two mutually contradictory supports to each individual: one based on his abstract humanity and the other on his unique particularity, and the two simply cannot be made to parse in the same political syntax, a point that Taylor, an Anglophone from Quebec, notes with rare acuity:

These two modes of politics, then, both based on the notion of equal respect, come into conflict. For one, the principle of equal respect requires that we treat people in a difference-blind fashion. The fundamental intuition that humans command this respect focuses on what is the same in all. For the other, we have to recognize and even foster particularity. The reproach the first makes to the second is just that it violates the principle of nondiscrimination. The reproach the second makes to the first is that it negates identity by forcing people into a homogeneous mold that is untrue to them.

Among the responses to Taylor's lecture, Michael Walzer's (the shortest) does remark on the hypocrisy behind Enlightenment liberalism ("no doubt state neutrality is often hypocritical, always incomplete"). Taylor, of course, does not characterize the Enlightenment/Romantic program as hypocrisy but rather as inherently contradictory, a point brought out, seemingly unconsciously, by Steven Rockefeller, another respondent, who juxtaposes these two sentences without appearing to notice how the one unravels the other:

From the democratic perspective, particular cultures are critically evaluated in the light of the way they give distinct concrete expression to *universal* capacities and values. [Yet] the objective of a liberal demo-

cratic culture is to respect—not to repress—ethnic identities and to encourage *different* cultural traditions to develop fully their potential for expression of the democratic ideals of freedom and equality, leading in most cases to major cultural transformations [emphasis added].

But these transformations don't come cheap, which is precisely why the issue is so neuralgic. The contradiction lurking in all this rhetoric is the quite unspoken presupposition that governs this debate: that *some* culture has to be the chump and play the role of the fall guy, an admission that perhaps only comes to light in this telling line from respondent Susan Wolf: "And the problems of those who have been urged to ignore or suppress or remove their differences from white Christian heterosexuals can remind us of the dangers of trying to deny the significance, say, of gender differences that may run very deep." A nice touch there, that glancing reference to "Christian."

But what goes unrecognized in the book is how a Christian perspective on human nature might actually not only illuminate these difficulties but point a way, if not to their resolution, at least to an identification of their source. For example, one odd feature of the book is Taylor's assertion that the trend toward a politics of recognition can be seen as "just a continuation and development inaugurated by Saint Augustine, who saw the road to God as passing through our own self-awareness." What is insufficiently noted is how diametrically opposed are St. Augustine's view of human nature and that of Rousseau. Taylor at one point even quotes Rousseau to the effect that "with liberty, wherever abundance reigns, well-being also reigns"—scarcely, to say the least, a continuation of Augustine's pessimistic view of human nature. This Rousseauian optimism is perhaps the root of the modern pathos, for nothing could be so obviously self-refuting. In fact, it is *out of* the

Rousseauian view of human nature that the politics of recognition first grew, and nothing more characterizes that politics than its sheer insatiability, as the German sidewalk stalker amply demonstrates.

Educating for Freedom?

AN ARISTOCRACY OF EVERYONE: THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE OF AMERICA. By BENJAMIN R. BARBER. Ballantine Books. 370 pp. \$20.

Reviewed by Charles L. Glenn

"IN THE SPRING OF 1988," writes Benjamin Barber, a professor of political science at Rutgers, "[University] President Edward Bloustein gave a commencement address in the form of a meditation on the sad state into which America's large universities had fallen—the pathologies of community and the classroom that had created a sense of crisis in the nation at large. . . . He proposed a mandatory program of citizen education and community service as a graduation requirement for all students." And it was Barber whom Bloustein asked to chair the committee charged with developing the program.

The Rutgers initiative in civic education, though not fully implemented by the time of the writing of Barber's new book (he describes it as "currently being reviewed by duly constituted faculty bodies," which could postpone its realization well into the next millennium), consists of a combination of worthwhile academic and community service elements. The book itself, however, is at once troubling and disappointing.

It is disappointing in that, raising the most fundamental issues about the nature and direction of American society, it proposes only an almost comically modest remedy. Even if we take at face value Barber's claim that the principles developed

by his committee at Rutgers are "remarkable in how they fold notions of community, democracy, and citizenship into pedagogy in an attempt to redress the pathologies of modern education," we might ask whether any college program should be expected to heal what he considers "our radical individualism that ties us to grasping, naked selves." Is it really true, as he claims, that "what happens today in a third-grade classroom or a college seminar determines whether tomorrow the great American community flourishes or fails"? As a teacher of future teachers, I would be flattered to believe that he is right. But if I did so, I'm afraid I would be falling into the perennial delusion of those who would reshape society and human nature itself through schooling.

The troubling part is that, in the name of an eloquently expressed communitarian vision for a free society, Barber is quick to propose that the minds and hearts of the young be made a target of *public* policy rather than being sheltered within the sphere of freedom that the First Amendment to our Constitution seeks to protect. Like the Jacobins of the French Revolution or the Bolsheviks in the 1920s, Barber proposes to use compulsory schooling to remake human nature. Characteristic of the nature of his argument is the ringing statement: "There is only one road to democracy: education. And, in a democracy, there is only one essential task for the educator: teaching liberty."

IT SOUNDS WONDERFUL—there is certainly an association between rising levels of education and the demands for broader participation in political decision-making—but it would be easy to cite examples of nations with world-class levels of education whose citizens have sat still for authoritarian or totalitarian political systems with little significant protest, and others with low education levels where civic participation is high. Similarly, we can hope that educators would help the young to develop both the qualities of character and the skills and knowledge that

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contribute to the maintenance of a free society, but how reduce the great complexity of this assignment to something called “teaching liberty”?

Barber does not appear to recognize that a primary reason for the fact that teachers in our public elementary and secondary schools do not generally do an effective job in preparing their students for responsible citizenship in a free society is that they work within an educational system that does not itself value freedom. As a recent international comparative study published by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development points out, public schools in the United States enjoy less autonomy in decision-making than do those in comparable nations. My own research indicates that American public policy provides less support for parental choice of schools than does that in Germany, France, Sweden, or other nations of Europe.

Not that *An Aristocracy of Everyone* lacks eloquence on the nature of freedom and of community. For example:

People feel free concretely not simply when they have choices, but when their choices feel meaningful; not when there is chaos and disorder in which anything is possible, but when what is possible is a set of life choices ordered by ethical or religious values they have chosen for themselves; not when they are left alone, but when they participate in free communities that permit them to define common lives autonomously and establish common identities freely. There is more freedom in choosing to embrace one's religion of birth than in being told by the state you can believe in anything you please.

The reader of such a passage might expect its author to argue further that freedom will best be learned in schools that have been chosen by parents, teachers, and even pupils, schools that (if they so choose) are

“ordered by ethical or religious values” and in which those who have made a commitment so ordered to one another are free to establish a common and distinctive identity. He might even argue that schools with a clearly profiled identity will not only nurture the habits of freedom but are likely to be more effective in teaching academic subjects as well (something pointed out in a recent Rand study and by research in the Netherlands and elsewhere).

But in building his case for “teaching liberty,” alas, Barber is not prepared to go so far as to call for educational freedom for parents, children, and teachers. This failure presumably follows from his conviction that “diversity and difference” must be kept firmly in the private sphere but “prudently barred from the public sphere” in order to protect “a universal personhood for all citizens.” The federal government should mandate that all Americans perform national service, not only to educate the young for democracy but also to “restore to our educational institutions a sense of mission they have long lacked.”

Not that by this I mean to suggest that Barber's proposals are in the least bit totalitarian; indeed, after his highly pessimistic reading of the current condition of our culture and society, they may strike the reader as anticlimactic. Moreover, we might fault Barber for his lack of trust in the good sense of the American people. An author who can write, “In a society where nobody reads, except when required to, the battle for culture of any kind may already be lost,” has not been riding on the subway much. More important, the continuing vigor of community life and voluntary associations in the United States is curiously ignored by a political scientist with communitarian learnings.

SUMMING UP, then, although it may in some sense be true, as Barber asserts, that “community is the beginning and the end of education—its indispensable condition, its ultimate object,” the effective educative communities are families, schools, col-

leges, churches, and other associations that frequently are shaped by a conviction of truth that comes from beyond the community itself and even from beyond the nation. Children learn the virtues that sustain a free society in such real communities, while adults deepen their own commitment as they work and sacrifice and dream to sustain them.

Revival of a sense of community in America (to the extent that it has been lost) must surely start from a renewed respect on the part of political scientists and other policy gurus for the real communities with which most Americans identify and through which they give meaning to their lives and seek to transmit what they have found of lasting importance to their children. The growing bureaucratization of public schooling over the past hundred years undermines the voluntary linkage among adults with a shared concern for a particular group of children through which such educative communities are created and sustained. Accepting the present structures of American schooling as an expression of the society as a whole, represented by government, Barber is not able to show how effective educational communities can be given space to do their essential work.

Why That God Failed

RETREAT FROM THE FINLAND STATION: MORAL ODYSSEYS IN THE BREAKDOWN OF COMMUNISM. By KENNETH MURPHY. *Free Press*. 415 pp. \$24.95.

Reviewed by James Finn

THE TITLE OF Kenneth Murphy's work is an obvious allusion to Edmund Wilson's *To the Finland Station*, first published in 1940. In that milestone study Wilson traced, in the words of his subtitle, “the revolutionary tradition in Europe and the rise of socialism,” from its begin-

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nings in the eighteenth century up to the fateful moment in April 1917 when Lenin disembarked from the sealed train at St. Petersburg's Finland Station. In this present book, Murphy undertakes to "biopsy that idea [of socialism] in its decline and fall in Europe," and to do so using Wilson's method. Wilson had traced the growth of socialism by examining in their historical and cultural background the lives of these major figures upon whom the idea had a considerable impact, those who developed the idea, grasped it as a faith, and transmitted it to succeeding generations: Vico, Michelet, Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, and others.

Murphy begins his study historically at the point Wilson ended his—with the revolutionary seizure of power in 1917, when the concept of socialism was pressed into large political service in Russia. In suitably brief compass he rehearses the familiar events of 1917 that led to Lenin's rule and, later, to Stalin's succession, when the utopian dream turned into the bloody nightmare. It is at this point, when the beliefs of the Communist faithful and sympathizers are challenged, that Murphy's study becomes charged and exciting. The original part of his work begins as he analyzes how a gradual disenchantment with socialism in practice seeped into the minds and lives of the figures he has chosen as representative: André Gide, Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, Milovan Djilas, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, and others.

Here he copes with questions that have puzzled and plagued analysis of Communism for decades. Why did so many distinguished intellectuals and artists become members of a Party, and/or apologists for a system, whose vast and continuing brutalities were revealed anew at irregular intervals during the greater part of this century? Why did some shed their illusions even as others, like Jean-Paul Sartre, continued on the path of willful self-deception? And having shed their illusions about socialism, how did the disenchanted look back and assess their participa-

tion in the Communist movement?

FOR MURPHY'S PURPOSES, André Gide is a particularly enlightening example. With a carefully developed reputation as an individualist of rectitude and integrity, Gide's enlistment in a cause that violated some of his long-declared principles presents the case sharply. Born in 1869, Gide was not a young man swept up by youthful enthusiasm and exuberance but already a seasoned writer and polemicist when he wrote, "I would like to cry aloud my sympathy for the Soviet Union and hope that my cry might be heard and have effect." Gide had come to this, writes Murphy, because this ardent advocate of individualism and liberty had found that liberty in itself was not sufficient, that it must be joined to something beyond. "Yearning for that wrenching sense of moral obligation, Gide turned to Communism."

In the mid-thirties, the time of the Popular Front, the French Commu-

nist Party found it useful to provide public forums where Gide's cry could indeed be heard. Then, in 1936, having decided to experience the Communist experiment firsthand, Gide travelled to the Soviet Union, where he was officially and warmly embraced. Nevertheless, he became deeply disillusioned with what he saw there—servility and conformity, tawdry surroundings, lack of privacy, high privileges for some and crushing poverty for the rest. Returning to France, he published *Retour de U.R.S.S.*, a brief but sharp indictment of the Soviet system. The book provoked an immediate and electrifying response: Gide had committed rank political heresy. But what Gide criticized harshly was the existing Soviet state and its dictator, Joseph Stalin; he still placed hope in the idea of socialism. His was a judgment that was to become increasingly common. What was at fault was not Communism but its perversion in the Soviet Union.

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Murphy's account of Gide's political odyssey is meshed with his assessment of the man and his art, which is both shrewd and severe. For example, he writes: "To learn of Gide's life is to build a picture of a man shut up in a daydream world, protected by all the authority of a superb culture, tortured by self-pity and not by pity for mankind. To fall eventually for the socialist dream was almost natural." And rejecting the charge of vacillation so often brought against Gide, Murphy says, "Conscience was the instrument by which he lived and worked; and the hypnotic effect of his disillusion with Communism is that sense that we are watching not a free man but a technician or tester of freedom." Gide's admirers, whose numbers nowadays seem to have diminished, might reject these judgments, but except for the comment about Gide's fall for socialism seeming almost natural, they are penetrating and persuasive.

THROUGHOUT HIS BOOK Murphy is profligate with ideas, and in the case of Koestler he seems to have more ideas than he can use—at least use coherently. "Koestler does not appear to know his own mind. He is

all over the place." And Murphy seems, at first, constrained to follow him. There were many sides to the cosmopolitan Hungarian, and in exciting times he lived a very active life. As a correspondent, he worked in the Middle East, Palestine, Paris, and Berlin during years of turmoil. According to his own testimony, reading Marx, Engels, and Lenin blew away dusty confusions and replaced them with lucid certainties. He became a Party member in 1931, infatuated with conspiracy. But his experiences in the Spanish Civil War, put forth in *The Spanish Testament*, undermined his certainties and led, eventually, to what has long been regarded as a classic study of Communist faith, the novel *Darkness at Noon*. Murphy describes this as a powerful book but not an imaginative work of the highest order, comparing it unfavorably with Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*, admittedly a very high standard. After this climactic achievement, Koestler's power dwindled. His attack upon Communism extended into an attack upon belief itself, and by implication upon Koestler's own earlier self for the attachment to Communism.

As in the case of Gide, Murphy of-

fers succinct evaluations of Koestler and his work. "Koestler cannot, as Dostoevsky did, discern the psychic causes for converting to the revolutionary faith. Yet the sense of strain and rupture speak more eloquently of dislocation and frustration than anything Gide ever wrote." And again, writing of Koestler's definition of liberty, which he continued to proclaim throughout his life, Murphy says:

Koestler hated the imposition of restraints upon anyone at anytime under any conditions. Lift restraints, and all will be well. The search for something less philosophically muddled in Koestler's work is unrewarding. He used words not to describe but to inflame, and became a master at it.

Again, a severe but balanced and persuasive summing up.

Murphy follows the same method in his analysis of Ignazio Silone, before he turns to those he labels "enemies of the people": Milovan Djilas, Imry Nagy, the Khrushchev of the Secret Speech that revealed Stalin's monstrous crimes, Alexander Dubcek, and, notably, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Much of this will be familiar territory for many readers, but it is Murphy's intention to show how the doubts and revulsion of ex-Communists and sympathizers like Gide, Koestler, and Silone were echoed in the Soviet empire itself. He follows the process of the disintegration of Communism up to Gorbachev and his fall from power. On the question of whether Gorbachev was a true believer or, rather, a subtle manipulator of Communist ideology, principles, and slogans, Murphy has no doubts.

And so the Communist faith withered. But Gorbachev's faith did not. Mounting chaos only drew him back into the Leninist fold. If socialism failed, if perestroika and glasnost failed, it wasn't because the dream was defective, or the faith utterly flawed; it could

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only be because ordinary men and women had failed the faith. A purer and purer faith is what he called for.

Gorbachev's wish had been from the beginning to work his way back to the supposedly pure socialism bequeathed to Russia and the world by Lenin and Bukharin. As he stumbled, however, he proceeded with the tool of faith alone.

The evident confidence with which Murphy makes large judgments constitutes much of the attraction of this study, but occasionally it leads him to make statements that are at least contestable. And for someone who dissects the writings of others with such skill, his own lapses can be disconcerting. He asserts, for example, that "the claims of a prophet are counsels of perfection, and perfection implies uniformity." Putting aside what "claims" means in this sentence, it is an ethical commonplace that not every act, person, or thing is perfect in the same way. No uniformity is implied. He declares that Koestler "had the satirist's satanic genius." Would that every satirist had genius, satanic or otherwise. He asserts that "the true ex-Communist can never be a whole personality." Well, that covers a large and questionable territory. He writes that Silone's "grave manner removes the sickness from piety." Some piety is clearly sickly but just as clearly, not all piety is. Of Gide he says, with a hyperbole that even his claim of being consciously hyperbolic cannot justify, "He loved every manifestation of art and beauty as deeply as anyone at any time."

Edmund Wilson had written, "All of these ideas which Michelet found in Vico were not of course new to Michelet." In an oddly unsuitable echo of Wilson, Murphy writes, "All of the ideas to be found in Koestler were, of course, not new to [i.e., with] him." He says on one page that Solzhenitsyn has no face, that it is blank, and on the next page that it is the face of a prophet. These are but a few examples, not of course seriously damaging to the work overall, but sufficiently annoying to

make one wish Murphy had written with less "color" and more precision.

Be that as it may, Murphy has accomplished the important task he set for himself. He has shown how the utopian desire and the Communist claim to produce equality in society inevitably clashed with the principle of liberty, how the barbarous means used to coerce equality destroyed the proclaimed ends, and how intellectuals and artists attracted to the utopian ideal were repelled by the actual results. He acknowledges that he could have selected a totally different set of representative figures and that his is far from the full story, yet the inevitably partial narrative he offers is a welcome addition to the postmortems on the Communist corpse.

BRIEFLY NOTED

NEWMAN AND HIS AGE. By SHERIDAN GILLEY. *Christian Classics*. 485 pp. \$39.95.

Wilfred Ward did it, Meriol Trevor did it, and, more recently, Ian Ker did it, and one might have thought that there was no need for another biography of John Henry Newman. But, as is often the case, we don't know what we need until it appears, and that is true with *Newman and His Age*. Gilley, a theologian at the University of Durham, gives us a straightforward telling of the life, with perhaps less attention to the age than the title suggests. He says his ambition is to keep Newman's humanity and thought in close conversation, and he succeeds admirably. The portrait is loving, reluctantly critical where criticism is necessary, and laced through with wry and sometimes sardonic asides. The prickly and frequently precious sides of Newman's personality are played down, while his chief arguments are summarized with rare lucidity. Between humanity and thought, Gilley ends up giving greater attention to the thought, which would likely please his subject, whom he calls "the greatest of English theologians" and whom Jaroslav Pelikan calls the most in-

fluent theologian of the past two centuries, bar none. "There can never be a definitive biography of Newman, only new Newman biographers," writes Gilley. He is probably right, and aspiring new biographers now have a new standard by which their efforts will be measured.

THE FIRST DISSIDENT: THE BOOK OF JOB IN TODAY'S POLITICS. By WILLIAM SAFIRE. *Random House*. 273 pp. \$27.

The libertarian-leaning columnist says he began this book with "doubt in his faith" and ended it with "faith in his doubt." The tension between God's commitment to order and man's penchant for chaos "generates the energy of freedom." There is a good deal of the journalist's cleverness here, but then how many journalists are wise enough to know that they should at least try to reflect seriously on such as Job?

THE LIVING TRADITION OF CATHOLIC MORAL THEOLOGY. By CHARLES E. CURRAN. *University of Notre Dame Press*. 264 pp. \$27.95.

Father Curran, now at Southern Methodist University after a raucous and much-publicized break with Catholic University, gathers together his essays and occasional writings in support of what he terms "creative fidelity" to Catholic teaching. Regrettably, the synthesis of the adjective and noun is no more evident here than in his earlier writings.

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THE CRISIS IN MORAL TEACHING IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH. Edited by TIMOTHY SEDGWICK and PHILIP TURNER. *Morehouse*. 158 pp. \$11.99 paper.

"Who speaks for the church to whom on what? Why? And how?" Those are the questions addressed by eight thinkers in the Episcopal Church in the United States (ECUSA). Sexuality, reproductive technology, abortion, economics, and war and peace are all addressed with intelligence and civility. These questions, plus the more general consideration of moral authority in contemporary Christianity, make

this a book that should be of interest not only to Episcopalians.

NEW HYMNS FOR THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH. By CAROL DORAN and THOMAS H. TROEGER. *Oxford University Press*. 73 pp. \$12.95 paper.

Alright, so it is not immediately evident why this should be noted in a journal on religion and public life. So let us reach a bit. It is frequently observed that a sign of the cultural decline of Christianity is the absence of new hymnody that is not guitar-plucking, rock-imitating schlock. These twenty-five hymns by Doran (music) and Troeger (words) are a

heartening piece of counterevidence. We hope that clergy and music directors among our readers will take a look.

THE NEW STANDARD JEWISH ENCYCLOPEDIA. Seventh Edition. Edited by GEOFFREY WIGODER. *Facts on File*. 1,001 pp. \$59.95.

An updated and revised version of a deservedly classic reference work. The new seventh edition incorporates the most recent developments in Middle East politics, Jewish population movements, and cultural events.

HOLY SIEGE: THE YEAR THAT SHOOK CATHOLIC AMERICA. By KENNETH BRIGGS. *HarperCollins*. 594 pp. \$27.

A veteran journalist's journal of one year of mainly public events in American Catholicism (September 1986 to September 1987). Viewed from a decidedly left-of-center ("progressivist") angle, and one might object that almost any year nowadays is a year that shakes Catholic America. Nonetheless, Mr. Briggs has produced an engaging read.

IN SEARCH OF A NATIONAL MORALITY. Edited by WILLIAM BENTLEY BALL. *Baker/Ignatius*. 298 pp. \$13.99 paper.

Subtitled "A Manifesto for Evangelicals and Catholics," this fine collection includes essays by some of the most influential thinkers in both communities. Abortion, family policy, education, human rights, religious freedom, and much else come in for trenchant examination. As is evident in Ball's preface, "Life in an Occupied Country," the need is not so much for a "national morality" as for an assertive Christian morality pertinent to shaping public debate about the American experiment in ordered liberty. This book is strong evidence of the increasing convergence of evangelical Protestant and Roman Catholic understandings of our cultural crisis and how it might be addressed.

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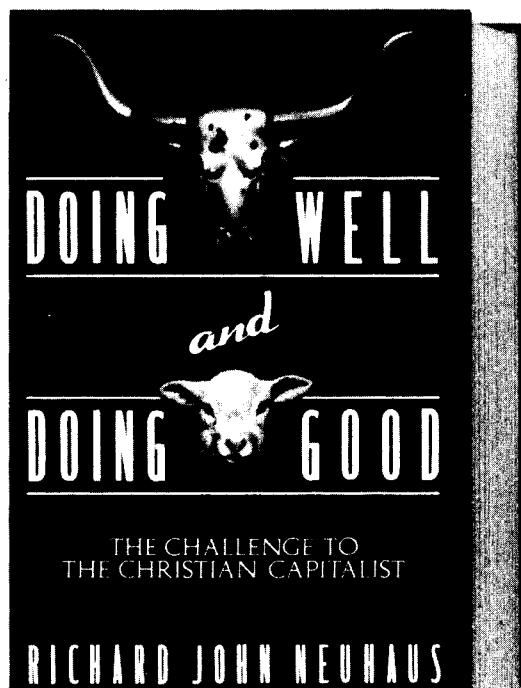
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NATURE, GOD, AND PULPIT. By ELIZABETH ACHTEMEIER. *Eerdmans*. 206 pp. \$16.95.

Preachers, but not only preachers, will be enriched by reading this spirited and solidly biblical argument for a greater emphasis on God as Creator. Achtemeier is unintimidated by current fashions in addressing the singularity of human beings in the order of creation, and in distinguishing between Christian respect and pagan worship in our attitude toward nature.

THE LIBERAL POLITICAL SCIENCE OF RAYMOND ARON: A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION. By DANIEL J. MAHONEY. *Rowman & Littlefield*. 185 pp. \$14.95 paper.

The late French political thinker Raymond Aron was a liberal in the continental, rather than the Anglo-American, sense of the word—more of Montesquieu and Tocqueville

than Locke or Mill (to say nothing of Rawls or Dworkin). Aron's political science was derived from the broad tradition of humanistic learning, avoiding the narrow, desiccated "science" of politics that is often taught in university departments today. A secularized Jew with a practical approach to politics and society, he still had enough depth to influence serious religious thinkers. Daniel J. Mahoney's brief, lucid, and highly stimulating treatment will no doubt help generate enthusiasm for Aron's writings and build up his stature in the English-speaking world.

REDEFINING THE FIRST FREEDOM: THE SUPREME COURT AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF STATE POWER. By GREGG IVERS. *Transaction*. 198 pp. \$32.95.

As the subtitle suggests, the author, who teaches government at American University, offers a rather

somber view of recent developments in church-state jurisprudence. His thesis is that the Court is relaxing both the no establishment and free exercise provisions of the religion clause, thus leaving individual conscience at the mercy of politics and opening the way to state support for more established religious institutions.

PRIMARY READINGS IN PHILOSOPHY FOR UNDERSTANDING THEOLOGY. Edited by DIOGENES ALLEN and ERIC O. SPRINGSTED. *Westminster/John Knox Press*. 308 pp. \$19.95 paper.

An admirable idea for classroom use and for those with no access to primary sources. From Plato and Descartes through Marx and Wittgenstein, the editors pull together excerpts most pertinent to understanding the theological developments of the past two centuries.

THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

WHAT IS TO BE LEARNED FROM "THE CHURCH IN SOCIALISM"

At Boston University's Institute for the Study of Economic Culture, headed by sociologist Peter Berger, a recent conference asked what the end of socialism means for Christian ethics. One paper given was Berger's "Social Ethics in a Post-Socialist World" (FT, February). Another was by Trutz Rendtorff, professor of Christian ethics at the University of Munich, and a major player in the leadership of German Protestantism. Many Protestant leaders, Rendtorff notes, were somewhat slow to applaud the collapse of the wall between East and West. A small thing, but a thing of great symbolic importance, was that the churches disappointed the popular expectation that church bells would be rung the day that German unification was formally declared. Leaders were taking their time, too, about reuniting the Protestant church, which had been divided in 1969 under Communist pressure. At first they said reunion was scheduled for 1995 or thereabouts, but, in response to popular demand, the two jurisdictions were patched together in 1991.

In the last days of Communism in East Germany (DDR), it seemed that the Protestant church was the very center of the action. And it was. But in retrospect it became apparent that the action was more political than indicative of anything like a spiritual revival. The church provided the only available space for protest against the regime. Now, says Rendtorff, "a profound reversal of opinion has taken place." The

climate has been additionally soured by the opening of the archives of the *Staatssicherheitsdienst*, or the Stasi, as the former secret police is called. It turns out that a distressing number of church leaders, including some who presented themselves as the democratic force opposing the regime, were in fact collaborating with the Stasi. The generalization is sadly true, writes Rendtorff: "The church exercised no active resistance against the socialist regime. Did it perhaps even support the regime, even if only in the interest of protecting its continued existence?"

In 1949, 80 percent of the DDR population belonged to the Protestant church, and 15 percent were Roman Catholic. By 1989, says Rendtorff, it seems likely that no more than 10 percent of the population were active Christians. That is one obvious measure of what forty years of socialism meant for the churches in the DDR. From the beginning of the Soviet occupation, a Russian model was adopted and it was continued by the German Communists. As in Soviet treatment of Russian Orthodoxy, the church was to be reluctantly tolerated so long as it confined itself to the sanctuary, to *Kultus*. Any attempt by the church to address broader social questions was declared to be an illegitimate interference in affairs that were none of its business.

"It is true," says Rendtorff, "that the authorities legitimated this attempt to restrict the church to the narrow sphere of *Kultus* and the care of souls by appeal to the modern principle of the separation of church and state. In fact, however, government policy regarding the church followed the principle of the unity of state and Party." The Party was the government, the Party was the society, the Party was everything. The concession to allow the church to operate within rigid confines was only temporary. "One of the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism held that the realization of Communism meant the withering away of religion. Moreover, socialism on its way to Communism was expected to perform active euthanasia on religion."

Little wonder that the regime was hostile to those pastors and theologians who wanted to engage in "Christian-Marxist dialogue." From the Communist viewpoint, such dialogue served the purpose of lulling "useful idiots" in the West into a more positive disposition toward socialism, but the dialogue also ran directly counter to the claim of the Party that it had a monopoly on defining Marxism,

and the Party knew that its definition had no place for Christianity. Rendtorff offers the lapidary observation, "This kind of critical discussion between Christianity and socialism, as in 'Christian-Marxist dialogue,' is a phenomenon of Western societies and churches."

The Guilt of the Churches

"Whoever wanted to be someone in the DDR," says Rendtorff, "could under no circumstances let their identity as a Christian be known. This consistent discrimination against Christians under socialism was without question the greatest burden imposed upon the members of the church during the DDR's forty-year history." It also helps explain the dramatic decline in active church membership. Church leaders could and did develop grand theories about "the church in socialism," suggesting a compatibility, even complementarity, between Christianity and socialism, but the regime was having none of it. "The only professions excluded from systematic discrimination against Christians were those professions pursued within the strict organizational boundaries of the church itself," Rendtorff writes. It is not entirely surprising, one may note, that after 1989 so many pastors entered politics. In the DDR, the pastorate was one of the very few positions that provided at least some distance from complete control by the Party. With the end of the socialist regime, those who were more politically motivated to begin with no longer needed the "cover" of the pastorate.

The obsequiousness of the Protestant church in the DDR may be explained in part by the fact that, before 1961, millions of DDR citizens fled to the West, including a significant number of theologians. For reasons both good and bad, church leaders who remained were determined, somehow, to make their peace with the regime. They would become the architects of the theory and praxis of "the church in socialism." Two themes, says Rendtorff, promoted a conceptual and psychological "accommodation to the socialist state." They were "anti-fascism" and "anti-capitalism."

"The church blamed itself because it had not quickly or courageously enough resisted National Socialism. Socialism, as the representative of the anti-fascist camp, was, after the Jews, the largest victim of fascism. The admission of the church's guilt provided the incentive for the church placing itself on the side of the victims of fascism by building up a socialistic society. The church also blamed itself for failing to respond to the social question of the working class and, as the church of the bourgeoisie, not opposing vigorously the destructive forces of capitalism. This guilt could now be expiated by the church's willingness to cooperate with a regime that would, presumably, guarantee social justice and equality for everyone while contending against the

forces of capitalism."

Capitalism, of course, meant chiefly the United States, with West Germany cast in the role of America's servile pawn. In the 1970s and 1980s, the themes of anti-fascism and anti-capitalism were joined to the compelling theme of "peace." Rendtorff writes: "The 'peace movement' was a self-designation of DDR rhetoric, and appealed to all 'peace-loving' men and women. For a long time the church resisted being coopted into the socialist 'peace camp.' But in the 1980s, under the influence of nuclear confrontation, the great closeness between the church and the DDR regime developed. Church leaders adopted the East's version of reality, which cast NATO and, most particularly, the Reagan administration as warmongers. The church leaders believed for some time that their approval of the 'peace policy' of the DDR was in agreement with their own theological and ethical convictions."

Ecumenical Impact

This explains also the prominent role of the DDR church in the ecumenical movement, especially the World Council of Churches (WCC). To get permission to travel, church leaders were expected to promote the regime's "peace policy"—a policy that much of the leadership of the WCC was only too eager to embrace. "The church of the DDR," writes Rendtorff, "was welcome in the *Oekumene* much more than the West German *Evangelische Kirche Deutschland* because, as a church that not only lived and worked under socialism but also 'in socialism,' it was suited to support the prevailing trend of the ecumenical body. From the *Oekumene*, the church in the DDR received a reinforcement of its desire to seek an accommodation with actual existing socialism."

In legitimating their chosen course, pastors and theologians drew on the thinking of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Lutheran pastor martyred under the Nazis, and of Karl Barth, the century's preeminent Protestant theologian. Of course they used both very selectively. The focus was on Bonhoeffer's observations about "religionless Christianity" in his last papers from prison. That focus fit nicely as a kind of confirmation of the Marxist critique of religion from within Christianity. Similarly convenient was Barth's polemic against bourgeois Christianity and the Western Enlightenment. The many and powerful writings of Bonhoeffer and Barth on the integrity of Christian witness and resistance to temporal powers were not so convenient for the theory and practice of "the church in socialism."

The collapse of "actual existing socialism" in the DDR and elsewhere does not mean the end of socialism per se, says Rendtorff. In Germany there are publications that argue that the events of 1989 simply illustrate the ever-present danger of counterrevolution and, *ex negativo*, confirm the

Marxist theory of history. Socialism as practiced in this century, says Rendtorff, leads to the “cancellation of the constitutional state” whose institutional arrangements are the most effective guarantee of freedom and human dignity. Protestant social ethics, he believes, continues to fail to appreciate the moral significance of the constitutional state.

There is a reason for that, he argues. Protestant ethics (and here we would add that the failing is not limited to Protestant ethics) has reinforced the desire to overcome the state in a society that is all-encompassing of human needs and aspirations. “The dependence of the basic ideas of socialism on conviction makes it imperative that only those who have the right convictions are called to cooperate in the realization of socialism’s goal. Therefore, the Party as the community bound by conviction takes the place of law and government. As a result, the acknowledgement of individual rights becomes dependent upon the individual’s prior conversion to the convictions of socialism. In contrast, the decisive foundation of the constitutional state is the fact that membership in the community bound by law is valid independently of confession and conviction.”

The Hunger for Community

The affinity between Christian ethics and socialism is to be found in this idea of a community of conviction. The church is to be such a community of conviction. Only those truly belong who share the constituting conviction. Protestant ethics, Rendtorff suggests, has not really, not deeply, internalized the understanding of the difference between church and society. It is useful, he believes, to distinguish between “soft” and “hard” socialism. Soft socialism is evident among those Christians for whom the idea of church as a *societas perfecta* slides into secular notions of the ideal communication community (Habermas), of society as perfected human solidarity. Of course that notion is older than Marxism, going back to nineteenth-century *evangelisch-sozialen* movements, which were in this respect similar to aspects of the Social Gospel movement in the United States. “Soft” socialism is that bundle of ideas and sensibilities that drives toward *Gemeinschaft* (community) as distinct from *Gesellschaft* (society). Even the young Marx can be included in the genealogy of that sharp distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*.

One reason that soft socialism is so perduring among Christians is that it is tied to “the principle of hope” that is directed to the coming Kingdom of God. Rendtorff writes, “The eschatological ingredients are best suited to make the concept of soft socialism immune to concrete experience because of a hope that is always able to reformulate realities so that they are in accord with what is hoped for. Eschatological expectations are irrefutable; by virtue of their pure normativity, no experience can compel

their revision. This is the point at which we find the meeting between soft and hard socialism. Hard socialism presents itself as the vehicle and executor of the hopes of soft socialism. Hard socialism is a program of political and economic order, a form of rule.”

The Beautiful & the Ugly

Hard socialism does the dirty work, so to speak, of soft socialism. Soft socialists do not like to see freedom denied and ideals turned into a crass struggle for power, but these ugly means can be justified if they lead to the desired and necessary end. “Hard socialism,” Rendtorff observes, “has again and again been replenished from the intellectual, moral, and religious resources of soft socialism.” And so it is that in the DDR today there are Christians who speak about an “improved” socialism; the manifest failure of one form of hard socialism is in no way permitted to throw into question the commitment of soft socialism. Rendtorff expects that in the *Oekumene*, in church bureaucracies, and in the writings of “prophetic” theologians rhetoric and resources will continue to be devoted to the socialist “ideal.”

Like John Paul II in his 1991 encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, Rendtorff argues that the failure of socialism is to be found in its central tenet—the belief in the economic basis of the social realization of human hope. Christianity has, necessarily, an “eschatological surplus,” and the ever-present temptation of Christians is to invest that surplus in utopian programs for the economic and political order. The utopian impulse cannot be and should not be eradicated, but it must always be redirected to the judgment and promise of God. Put differently, the utopian impulse must be subordinated to an eschatological hope that is radically eschatological, that can mistake nothing short of the Kingdom of God for the Kingdom of God.

Plus ça change, one is inclined to think with respect to the socialist delusion. Soft socialism survives all falsifications by hard (real existent) socialism. As John Paul argues in *Centesimus Annus*, real existent socialism was not the betrayal of the socialist idea; it was the predictable fulfillment of the socialist idea. Rendtorff’s additional point is important, that the affinity with socialism is that it is, like the church, a community of conviction. It is not simply that some Christians want to establish the Kingdom of God now. It is also that they want the society to be something like the church, or at least what they think the church should be—a community of deep sharing, of solidarity, of community, of *Gemeinschaft*.

The constitutional state is something else, and necessarily so. Father John Courtney Murray wrote that our constitutional arrangements are “articles of peace,” not “articles of faith.” To be sure, in the American order these arrangements are premised

upon conviction ("We hold these truths . . ."), but the agreed convictions are very limited. They do not intend to be all-encompassing, they do not intend to provide a comprehensive meaning system.

Comprehensive meaning systems are the business of religion. The truths we hold are the truths that are necessary for ensuring a constitutional order that allows for the flourishing of many truths, of many meaning systems, of many encompassing explanations of reality. In short, the constitutional state makes pluralism possible.

The alternative to pluralism is monism. In this century, monistic hungers have generated the unspeakable tyrannies of National Socialism and Marxism-Leninism. Soft socialism, apparently so innocent and idealistic, is too often ready to take up with whatever hard socialism comes along to offer its help in realizing beautiful dreams. The monistic hungers are evident, too, among some Christians who yearn for a "Christian America," a society reconstituted on the basis of "Bible law" that assures solidarity in righteousness and truth. That is the project peddled by some who call themselves "Christian Reconstructionists" or "theonomists." Whether it appears on the right or the left, whether in religious or secular guise, monism is the perduring temptation. Monism presents itself as the alternative to a pluralistic, diverse, differentiated, fragmented, alienated, and generally unsatisfactory social order. In sum, it presents itself as the alternative to the real existent world short of the Kingdom of God. Its appeal for those who refuse to wait for or refuse to believe in the Kingdom is perfectly understandable. It needs only to be added that refusing to wait and refusing to believe are pretty much the same thing.

FT

THE CROWDED PUBLIC SQUARE

A good many Americans, it is reasonable to assume, do not regularly read the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, and they therefore miss the wisdom of Paul Greenberg, its editorial page editor (who also appears from time to time in these pages). He is always interesting, even when, maybe especially when, he is wrong. A recent editorial, prompted by the annual fuss over Christmas displays in public space, suggested that our problem is not the naked public square but the crowded public square. The Christians want a crèche, the Jews want a menorah, maybe next year the Muslims will want their crescent displayed, and pretty soon, says Greenberg, the square "looks like a competing bazaar of creeds or an

ancient pantheon of the known gods."

Everything gets trivialized. Greenberg cites an Arkansas secretary of state who a while back defended a Christmas display at the state capitol with the argument, "The Arkansas display incorporates the theme of Christmas and not just the Nativity of Christ." Greenberg continues: "There is a kind of territorial imperative at work here as temporal authority inevitably reaches out for symbols of the everlasting. But, although the state may covet holy symbols, it stops short of identifying itself explicitly with any confession of faith. It seeks religiosity, not religion."

"Those who claim that religious displays at public sites really do not commit the government to faith may have a point. Somehow that makes it worse. It's as if the state were adapting religion, not adopting it. How many years of using the menorah and the manger as civic decorations before they are seen as, yes, civic decorations?"

Greenberg's conclusion is that the naked public square can indicate respect and even reverence for religion, "as if the state understood that it still had limits, and that there are some things it should not lay hands on." Greenberg has a point, in fact several points. The placing of religious symbols in government space has never been among our big causes. That the public square is now so rigidly defined as government space rather than, more flexibly, as community space is a concern. Of greater concern is the reason why such symbols are typically removed. It is not because of the clamor for equal time and the danger of turning the square into "a bazaar of creeds." It is because of the triumph of the ACLU dogma that communal beliefs cannot be publicly expressed if even one person finds such expression offensive. The creed of that one person, who is usually a professing atheist, has veto power over the democratically determined ways in which the community publicly identifies itself. The naked square is a sign not of respect, never mind reverence, for religion, but of suspicion and hostility toward religion. It reinforces the doctrine that religion is a purely private predilection, and that wherever government advances religion must retreat.

Religious symbols in public space may be a lost cause in some places. But, in our judgment, the battle should not be given up without a fight. The naked square declares the inability of a community to arrive at peaceful and civilized accommodations — or, more often, the arrogant determination of the courts to nullify such accommodations. It declares the victory of a deadening secularism in stifling the celebration of the beliefs and traditions by which people live, or aspire to live. It is not simply a matter of "civic decoration." It is a matter of how the *civitas* and its diverse people are communally identified. We are a long way down the road to the situation in which any belief system or tradition can be publicly

expressed, under government auspices and even with government funding, except those that are “tainted” by their association with religion. This strikes us — and, we expect, most Americans — as being not what the Founders meant by the free exercise of religion. Perhaps we will not have to wait until next Christmas to get Paul Greenberg’s second thoughts on an editorial position that is, we respectfully suggest, very intelligently wrong.

FT

WHILE WE’RE AT IT

■ An outfit called Constructive Surgery advertises in our other local newspaper, the New York *Daily News*. The catchy heading over the picture of a very attractive woman is, “The Most Important Decision I Ever Made Was Choosing My Spouse. The Second, My Plastic Surgeon.” The text of the ad, however, would seem to reverse priorities. “Since plastic surgery lasts as long, if not longer, than marriage, it is imperative that you choose the right surgeon.” What on earth can Russell Kirk mean when he says that our society no longer respects The Permanent Things?

■ In editorial meetings, we spend a lot of time on titles of articles. Yes, we know, we make the evident mastery look easy, but it’s really hard work. Titles should be enticing but never coy, indicative of what the article is about but never giving everything away. (When, for example, you come across the title “Whither Incest?” you can be pretty sure it’s not a robust defense of traditional sexual ethics.) From time to time, however, you come across a title that stops you for a second. There’s something wrong about it, but you don’t know precisely what. This, for instance, on the cover of the liberal Catholic magazine *Commonweal*: “Easter: Has It Made a Difference?” We didn’t read the article but we felt reasonably confident that the answer was not in the negative, at least not unequivocally so. Our confidence was reinforced as we flipped by the page where the article began. There was an additional line under the title, a kind of subsubtitle: “The Evidence is Mixed.” Sounds about right.

■ It seems an awful shame to let those freshly killed babies go to waste when they could do so much good for others by, for instance, fetal brain transplantation. Robert J. White, Professor of Neurosurgery at Case Western Reserve University, points out that the medical claims for fetal brain transplants are grossly inflated (often by journalists who are always eager to find another good reason for

abortion). Almost all the research has been done on rodents, and the experiments with human patients are in fact *very* experimental. White writes: “Since almost all of the present-day research that would justify fetal brain transplantation for neurodegenerative diseases is based on rat-model investigation, it must seriously be asked whether or not it is appropriate to move to human treatment without further and more extensive subhuman primate research. In other words, at issue here is the ethical dilemma of undertaking human experimentation based on inappropriate and incomplete basic research. . . . When we move to using fetal brain tissue resulting from elective abortions, many practical and ethical problems develop. For example, the entire abortion procedure must be designed to protect the fetus in every way during the extraction so that its brain will not be damaged. In other words, a sophisticated physiological program of resuscitation has to be put into place to deliver and maintain an intact, viable infant. Anything less raises the possibility of damaging the fetal brain tissue. Even though the actual amount of fetal brain tissue required for transplantation must be small, tissue harvests from at least fourteen fetal brains are required for optimal results.” It is absolutely necessary, White notes, that the tissue to be transplanted is living, which means it must be from a viable brain. The brain remains a functioning entity until surgical dissection removes the deep structures needed for grafting. If death is defined as brain death—a definition widely accepted today—it follows that the infant outside the womb is being put to death. But please, do not call them baby killers. They are, they insist, only creatively recycling useful stuff that would otherwise go to waste.

■ We honor scrupulously our money-back guarantee to new subscribers, and no month passes without a handful of people taking us up on it. As we often say, *FIRST THINGS* is not for everyone. The most usual reason people give for wanting their money back is a variation on “the magazine is over my head.” That was the reason given this month by a teacher of religion who said he had a master’s degree in theology from Gregorian University in Rome, and by a professor of theology at a Protestant seminary in Missouri. We will try not to ponder what this says about religious literacy in our time. Then there is occasionally the reason given that the journal is “too conservative.” As in this letter from a woman in West Milton, Pennsylvania, who fancies herself an open-minded liberal. “Please do not mail me any more copies of this upsetting and unsettling magazine.” We gladly complied. Upset and unsettled liberals are the worst kind.

■ July 25, 1993 is the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*, the encyclical on human sexuality

issued by Pope Paul VI. That document is, in some tellings, the rearguard action that triggered the dissolution of church authority. According to others, it is a prophetic (in the sense of both courageous and prescient) rallying point for all who understand our culture's growing assault on human dignity. There will be no ambivalence about the encyclical at the "International Humanae Vitae Conference" to be held in Omaha, July 25-30. It shows all the promise of being a very big event. Among the stars scheduled to speak are Mother Teresa and Cardinal Lopez Trujillo (head of the Pontifical Council for the Family), and, among the minor asterisms, your editor. For more information, write Pope Paul VI Institute, 6901 Mercy Road, Omaha, NE 68106.

■ Religion in general and Christianity in particular are very bad for people. That is the consistent message pushed in the numerous books published by Prometheus Press, an aggressively ideological outfit that professes the faith of "secular humanism." One such book, by a retired psychiatrist, is *Deadly Doctrine: Health, Illness, and Christian God-Talk*. The mini-review in *Publishers Weekly* notes that the thesis of the book is that Christian teachings "are incompatible with sound health," and that Christian attitudes toward sexuality are especially toxic, leading to "phobic responses." *PW* observes, "His argument would have been more powerful had he concentrated on clinical examples; some of these—such as his accounts of a mother who prayed rather than comforting her distraught son at a family therapy session, and of a man who considers rape less sinful than masturbation—are chilling." Note that the *PW* reviewer seems to assume that the argument is true—Christianity is bad for your health. The only complaint is that the argument could have been made more powerfully by citing more clinical examples of attitudes and behaviors that have nothing to do with Christianity—that, in fact, are incompatible with Christianity. *PW* is an indispensable bulletin board on what is being published. Its evaluations of books, however, increasingly lurch from the quirky to the bizarre.

■ She to husband who tries to clinch an argument by citing a statistic: "That may be, but remember that they've found out that 63.8 percent of all statistics are false." Some readers love and others vigorously protest our occasional citing of statistics. We are of a divided mind. Very few truth claims that really matter can be confirmed or falsified by statistics. Yet ours is a culture in which, for forensic purposes, statistics appear to be indispensable. Say that most Americans think that they are Christians and someone is likely to counter that that is just your opinion. Note that Gallup reports that 91 percent of Americans say that they are Christians and you can then move on to discussing what is to be made of that

"fact." These observations are simply prefatory to noting some recent Gallup findings on religion and voluntarism. Readers who believe that statistics have no connection with, and may be hostile to, truth that matters are invited to skip this item lifted from the National and International Religion Report. "*Religion, volunteerism, and giving seem to go together for teen-agers*, according to a Gallup survey for Independent Sector (IS), a Washington, D.C.-based philanthropic coalition. Of the twelve- to seventeen-year-olds IS studied, 81 percent of the volunteers and 85 percent of the contributors reported that they and their families were members of religious organizations. From another angle, the statistics showed that 74 percent of all respondents said they were members of religious institutions, and of this group, 67 percent were volunteers. Of the 47 percent who attended weekly religious services, 70 percent volunteered. Overall, 61 percent of the teens volunteered an average of 3.2 hours per week last year, with 17 percent of them volunteering five or more hours each week, IS said. Also, among the 50 percent of teenagers who contributed last year, the average donation was \$56. The three reasons teens most frequently cited as causes for their volunteering: (1) they thought it important to help others (59 percent); (2) they felt compassion toward people in need (49 percent); and (3) they wanted to serve an important cause (46 percent). The most frequently mentioned volunteer tasks were baby-sitting (12 percent), leading or helping a youth group (6 percent), cleaning or janitorial work (5 percent), and teaching or tutoring (5 percent)."

■ Here's a brochure announcing the Paul Manz Institute for Church Music. It traces the genealogy of the achievement of Johann Sebastian Bach, from Bach's student Johann Kittel (1732-1809) all the way through to Flor Peeters in this century, who was the teacher of Paul Manz. Bach begat Kittel, Kittel begat Rinck, Rinck begat Hesse, and so forth. Of his own work and the purposes of the institute, Manz says, "We are as restless as we are ruthless in search of excellence. We reserve excellence for our God. Only the best will do. Only that which lifts us to the cross, the heart of God exposed, is good enough." To represent the tradition of Bach to our culture, and to do so with full theological intentionality, is a signal service to the cause of religion and public life. (For information on the new institute, write 1500 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago, IL 60657.)

■ There is perhaps more to be said than is ordinarily said in favor of mediocrity in leaders. At least that appears to be the gist of Paul Johnson's reflections on the trials of the British monarchy. "History indicates that monarchs with intellectual pretensions, like Henry III or George IV, do not do well here. That wise and learned historian, G. M.

Young, once shrewdly observed, 'The danger of having an educated king is that he would be bound to find some section of his subjects ridiculous.' Our Queen is in no danger of finding any of us ridiculous. On the contrary, I believe she views all her subjects with warm and disinterested affection."

■ Its editors might not like the description, but it's fair to say that the *Journal of Church and State* pretty predictably weighs in on the extreme separationist view of the religion clause. Also predictably, that tilt is tinged by a strong dose of anti-Catholicism. In the current issue a Samuel A. Mills has an article of uncritical adulation for Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan, himself a Catholic, who "courageously" resisted the teachings of his church on school aid and abortion. Asked in an interview if he might now, in retrospect, have decided some cases differently, Brennan retorts, "Hell no. I never thought I was wrong." Mills writes that "such resolute conviction no doubt sustained Justice Brennan" in adhering to his principles. He may well be right. Belief in one's infallibility likely induces a measure of judicial self-confidence.

■ There are two kinds of people in the world, observed E. M. Forster: those who say there are two kinds of people in the world and those who don't. But there are infinite ways of dividing up the human race. For instance, there are those who love or despise G. K. Chesterton, on the one hand, and those who have not read him, on the other. We love him, but have discovered that reading him too much leads to the peril of trying to sound like him. Those who try to sound like Chesterton sound as though they are trying to sound like Chesterton, which demeans both Chesterton and them. Such reflections are prompted by *The Chesterton Review* and its current special issue on Cardinal Manning. In this issue, Sheridan Gilley, author of the recent and first-rate biography, *Newman and His Age* (Christian Classics), reflects on the affinity between Chesterton and Henry Edward Cardinal Manning, Archbishop of Westminster from 1865 to 1892. Chesterton first saw the very ascetical Manning when he was descending from his carriage, dressed in the full glory of his cardinal's robes, which Chesterton described as a "crimson cloud of sunset." In his elegiac conclusion, Gilley ponders the disappearance of the remnants of Christian civilization still known to Chesterton and Manning: "It is precisely this legacy that is now fading from our sight, though it is unfair to accuse the modern world of blasphemy, when it leaves nothing holy to blaspheme. There can be no deconstruction where there is nothing left to deconstruct, though the so-

called postmodernist subversion of rationality and common sense as well as of metaphysics may have the ultimate benefit of restoring to them that air of wild romance which beckoned Chesterton back to them. How else shall we recover the sense that 'There never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy. It was sanity; and to be sane is more dramatic than to be mad.' Manning's holy poverty, his chastity, his compassion on the poor, the very shining of his robes, struck Chesterton's imagination like the Arabian Nights, as signs of a glory beyond imagining."

■ The new dean of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary in New York is Fr. Thomas Hopko, succeeding the late and highly esteemed Fr. John Meyendorff. In his inaugural address as dean, Fr. Hopko said many wise things to which Protestants and Catholics might well pay attention. For instance, this: "Prayer is the proof of theology; spiritual growth and ethical action are its fruit. Theologians are those who truly pray; and those who truly pray are theologians. The rule of worship is the rule of faith. Theology is sung by one voice in the midst of the church. It is the climax of purity, an experiential knowledge of God through a communion of love born of gratitude and praise in the midst of affliction and trial. We know very well that such sayings, so often repeated in Orthodox circles, are all too often nothing more than empty words for which account will be given on the day of judgment. But the mindless mouthings of truths do not make them any less true." And then there was this: "The seminary must display the diversity and affirm the variety of thought and expression which God's Holy Spirit inspires within the Body of Christ. It must also disclose its depth and complexity. Better real darkness than false light, say the saints; better real confusion than false clarity. Oversimplification, exaggeration, reduction, distortion, and caricature are abiding temptations for those engaged in theology."

Sources: Paul Greenberg on the public square, *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, December 23, 1992. On constructive surgery, New York *Daily News*, June 16, 1992. The title "Easter: Has It Made a Difference?" in *Commonweal*, April 24, 1992. Robert J. White on use of fetal brain tissue, *America*, November 28, 1992. *Publishers Weekly* review of *Deadly Doctrine*, December 14, 1992. Paul Johnson on the British monarchy in *The Spectator*, December 12, 1992. William J. Brennan quoted in *Journal of Church and State*, Autumn 1992. Sheridan Gilley on Chesterton and Manning, *The Chesterton Review*, November 1992.

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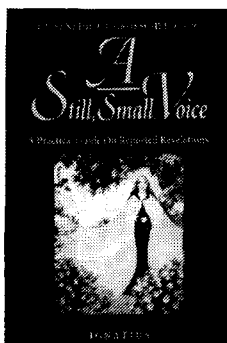
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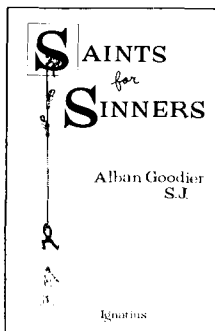
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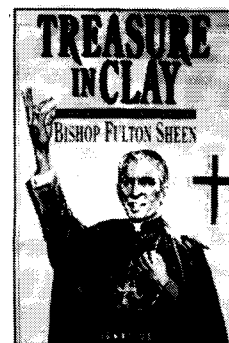
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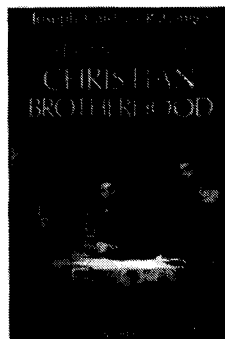
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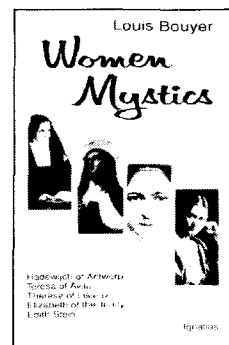
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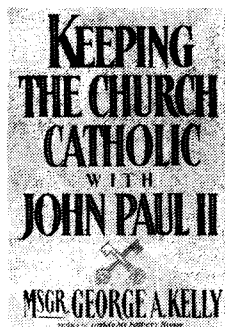
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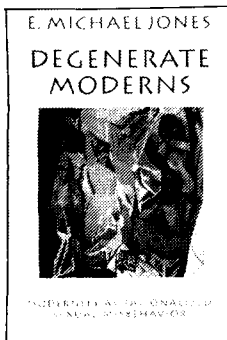
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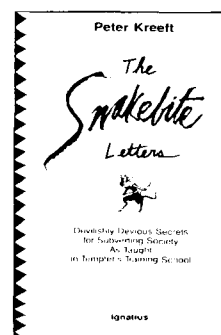
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